University of Alberta

Forest management and the public sphere: the case of public advisory committees in Alberta

by

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To my loving family…Sophie, Joshua, and Maya.

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Chapter One

PROLOGUE

Citizens in a civic community, on most accounts, are more than merely active, public-spirited, and equal. Virtuous citizens are helpful, respectful, and trustful toward one another, even when they differ on matters of substance (Putnam 1993).

Social cohesion is important, and nonconformity or dissent can undermine cohesion. But social influences threaten, much of the time, to lead individuals and institutions in the wrong direction. Dissent can be an important corrective; many groups and institutions have too little of it (Sunstein 2003).

Introduction

The excerpts offered above represent a striking tension among social scientists who think about the public sphere. On one hand, some are convinced that society is losing its 'civilities' and is rapidly unraveling along lines of ethnicity, race, class and socio-cultural identity. These divisions prevent us from engaging in constructive conversations about issues of common concern, prevent us from becoming more civic-minded and public-spirited, and destabilize the basic foundations of democracy. On the other hand, others are convinced that society has become far too comfortable with certain basic social and economic inequalities, that our democratic institutions perpetuate a kind of 'consensus in motion' about how goods and bads are distributed, who benefits, and who pays the cost. These people are more interested in challenging the social consensus, in breaking down civilities that serve to mask inequality, in re-politicizing the public sphere. This dissertation straddles this basic tension in the social sciences. It is focused on understanding the changes and challenges to the public sphere in contemporary society and it rallies around a central task that is motivated by John Dewey to improve the methods and conditions of debate, discussion and persuasion[1].

As a continuation of this research tradition, this dissertation focuses on the ways in which the public sphere functions under certain structural conditions. The case in question here involves forest sector advisory committees that have several defining

[1] As a philosopher and educator, Dewey developed an approach to teaching that involved problem-solving and moral skills development for children. Since these skills evolved in social settings, Dewey's later work focused more directly on political settings and the internal workings of public deliberation. Dewey described this work as 'the public and its problems' (1988).

features: one being a close association with the private sector, and another being the de-centered and small-scale nature of deliberative activity. The manuscripts contained in this dissertation provide a historical perspective and a close view of deliberative activities under these structural conditions. Although the basic approach to this study is informed by more critical theories of society, I remain optimistic about the potential of these public spaces as a source to not only become more understanding and public-spirited about the challenges of forest management in the 21st century. I also remain optimistic about these public spaces as a place for critical inquiry, debate and dissent. As a starting point for this empirical exploration, forest sector advisory committees in Albert must be understood in the larger context of industrial expansion during the 1980s and 1990s.

Industrial expansion and the public advisory committee

Alberta has experienced rapid forest industry expansion during the 1980s and 1990s (Pratt and Urquhart 1994; Timoney and Lee 2001; Schneider 2002). Several concurrent developments stimulated this growth. On the technological side, the development of pulping methods that could utilize previously non-merchantable tracts of poplar and aspen spawned large-scale thermo-mechanical and bleach kraft pulp mills. Transnational corporations such as Daishowa-Marubeni International Ltd and Mitsubishi Corporation funded several of these 'mega' projects. On the policy side, the government of Alberta was becoming more concerned about the province's heavy dependence on oil and gas revenue, and in response, developed an incentive system to promote economic diversification. This combination of modern pulping technologies and a business-friendly environment set the stage for industrial forestry at a scale formerly unimaginable in the boreal forests of Alberta. Along with this expansion in industrial capacity came guaranteed access to wood fibre on publicly owned land. These licenses to extract timber are renewed on a periodic basis if companies can demonstrate sustainable management practices (broadly defined). Although public consultation was integral to the approval process for initial industrial expansion (see for example Richardson et al. 1993), no formal process was in place for on-going public participation in the management of mills and the associated forest management area.

As industrial developments progressed at unprecedented rates, public concerns

began to emerge. Sensing apprehension from the Alberta public to this unprecedented industrial expansion, by the late 1980s, the provincial government gave the forest companies an ultimatum – to put in place some mechanism for public involvement as a condition for renewal of their forest management license. In response, the first public advisory committees (PACs) were established in 1989. Representatives on these committees included: town council, Chamber of Commerce, ministerial, medical, Aboriginal, forest workers, environmental, university and college representatives. Their mandate was to provide input into company forest management plans. In addition, they were intended to provide a network to the community, an arms-length perspective on company plans, and a reality check on potentially sensitive issues.

In the decade to follow, 14 PACs formed in association with forestry companies across the province. Each committee is unique, with its own set of organizational procedures and guidelines and its own set of local issues and concerns under consideration. Although these advisory committees are company-sponsored, autonomy from company control varies quite dramatically. Some committees operate at arms length from the company, as they select their own members, define their own issues of public concern, and challenge company and government policy pertaining to forest management. Other committees are more beholden to company interests: receiving information only from company-defined 'experts', providing non-critical feedback to forest management plans, and addressing a limited range of public values and concerns. How companies respond to advisory committee input is also highly varied. Officially, these are advisory committees with no direct decision making control, but some companies have stated in recent years that forest management plans will not be forwarded to government until approval is received from their public advisory committee. With so much variation in the functioning and relationship of these committees to their sponsoring company, some attempts are being made to formalize procedures. In the last few years, an umbrella organization has been established to provide a forum for members of these committees to convene annually, discuss common issues of concern, and learn from the successes and failures of other committees. To date, however, attempts to normalize advisory committee procedures have met with limited success.

A timely analysis

There are several reasons why this project is timely and relevant to contemporary issues in forest management. First, the policy framework for natural resource management in Canada has adopted a highly supportive position toward public participation in forest management. This is reflected in Federal policy such as the Canadian Council of Forest Ministers' Criteria and Indicators of Sustainable Forest Management (CCFM 2003), where indicators of fair and effective public involvement play a prominent role. The Canadian Model Forest Program also champions broad-based public and stakeholder involvement at a local level. Internationally, forest certification initiatives such as the Canadian Standards Association and Forest Stewardship Council champion public involvement as a key component to identifying and developing forest management standards. In this context, a critical appraisal of popular public involvement mechanisms, such as public advisory committees, may feed into policy frameworks that strengthen the democratic impulses within these governance systems.

Second, as indicated in chapter two, we can observe a gradual de-centering and privatizing of environmental governance in Canada. From first-generation participatory mechanisms, where public funds and government regulators were center stage, public participation activities are becoming more de-centralized and market-oriented (i.e., forest certification). Given this significant shift in public participation processes toward the local, the trend has not gone unnoticed. Dorcey and McDaniels (2001) see an increasing reliance on business and civil society in the governing of environmental resources. Urquhart (2001) observes a trend away from integrated resource management toward ecosystem management and public participation, and Davidson and MacKendrick (2004) demonstrate how the discourse associated with integrated resource management has shifted from one of government as manager and controller to one of government as visionary and facilitator. Resulting from this process of de-centering, the small-scale public advisory committee has become an important locale for the convergence of discourses associated with forest management. This project provides an opportunity to critically assess the strengths and weaknesses of this increasingly prominent mode of public engagement.

Third, natural resource sociology has employed several approaches to evaluating and promoting fair and effective public participation. One approach focuses on best practices, where 'lessons learned' and 'road blocks to involvement' are identified. Another approach comes from systems theory in the form of models for collaborative learning. These approaches address system complexity and focus on pragmatic ways in which stakeholders and informed citizens can work through differences and make decisions. Although these research traditions provide some critical insights into the construction of environments for social learning and the role of diverse public values, these approaches are relatively conservative in their historical and theoretical orientation. In contrast, critical theory (and to some extent deliberative democratic theory) is firmly positioned within a tradition of conflict theory. As a specific research method, critical theory is concerned with the emancipatory potential of individuals and groups from specific colonizing or oppressive forces. Emancipation, in this context, is induced by critical reflection on preferences and attitudes, and careful attention to issues of power and control. This project contributes to the natural resource sociology literature by employing a critical theoretical perspective to a case of public participation in the forest sector.

Early influences

This dissertation research was conducted on the heels of several initial studies with forest company-sponsored public advisory committees in Alberta. These studies were based primarily on survey research (McFarlane and Boxall 2000; Parkins et al. 2001), which informed a critical analysis of public advisory committees (Parkins 2002; Stedman and Parkins 2003). This analysis treated advisory committees as a form of the public sphere and offered a normative critique based on a Habermasian notion of the public sphere. In this way, the normative criteria served as a yard-stick for evaluation.

This approach to critical analysis is what Dryzek (1995) calls a pure critique or what Skollerhorn (1998) calls a critical approach. Dryzek suggests that this approach involves the construction of a particular standard and then assessing real-world structures and processes to determine to what extent they fall short of the ideal. This approach is exemplified in the work of Kemp (1985) and Webler (1995). Kemp investigated a 1976

public inquiry associated with British Nuclear Fuels Limited and their plans to build a waste recycling facility at Windscale, UK. In this case study, Kemp used Habermas's formulation of the ideal speech situation as the standard against which the discourse that took place at this inquiry could be judged. According to Habermas, there are certain institutional preconditions for practical discourse. These criteria "are intended to ensure that the consensus that emerges from practical discourse serves generalizable, and not particular, interests" (Kemp, 1985:187). Briefly, these include: communicatives (participants must prove understandable), representatives (participants are honest and sincere to themselves and to others), regulatives (bureaucratic regulations must be applied without bias), and constantives (all validity claims must be subject to scrutiny and truthfully grounded). Using this standard, Kemp asks a series of questions pertaining to the Windscale discourse. For instance, to what extent were the participants equally able to initiate and perpetuate discourse? Were participants equally able to raise issues and provide answers? Were the rules of the inquiry fair to all participants?

Against these standards of the ideal speech situation, Kemp delivered a stinging critique of Windscale by concluding "the communication process that occurred at the Windscale public inquiry was in fact systematically distorted and that the subsequent decision to allow the construction of a THORP [thermal oxide reprocessing plant] did not reflect a genuine consensus on the issue and was not reached solely due to the force of the better argument" (1985:190). Webler's work is similar in that he develops an "evaluative yardstick" or a "procedural normative model of public participation" (1995:38). Like Kemp, Webler bases his model on the ideal speech situation and then extends it to include criteria for fairness and competence in civil deliberations. The final evaluative product is a complex set of criteria against which any deliberative process can be assessed.

Similar to these normative approaches, the preliminary empirical work on forest sector advisory committees in Alberta provided several important findings. First, compared to the general public, advisory committee members exhibited significantly different attitudes toward the forest. These attitudes were much more in line with the attitudes of professional foresters who worked for government and industry. Second, one

of the biggest challenges to achieving the ideal type characteristics of a public sphere was the lack of autonomy between sponsoring agency and advisory committee.

Realizing that psychometric data from survey research could only provide limited insights into our understanding of advisory committee processes and functioning, a much closer encounter with advisory committees was envisioned. As stated in the research proposal, primary research objectives included:

- What are the underlying historical, socio-cultural, and structural relationships associated with these incipient discursive spaces?
- To what extent do these individual cases achieve the normative criteria associated with the public sphere?
- In light of this critical assessment, are there alternative discursive designs that might serve to expand the potential for recurrent communicative interaction?

These three objectives guided the early research phase by focusing primarily on an expanded analysis of the normative criteria associated with the public sphere. These criteria included ideas such as inclusiveness, the bracketing of social difference, rational arguments, and the ability of citizens to collectively identify new problems and acquire a wide range of expert and lay sources of information. This approach would expand on earlier, more preliminary, assessments with a much more in-depth and expanded analysis derived from ethnographic data.

Late influences

During the early phases of fieldwork, I continued to read books and articles on the subject of deliberative democracy and the public sphere. These readings along with observations at committee meetings stimulated a re-thinking of project objectives and the analytical approach. First, I became increasingly uncomfortable with thinking about these advisory committees as a tangible and unitary public sphere. In some ways, the advisory committee functions as a public sphere – by bringing a cross-section of citizens together, talking about issues of common concern, accessing a wide range of information, and reflecting upon and revising personal opinions. Understood this way, these committees mirrored some of the characteristics of a public sphere. On the other hand, these committees were observed to be one of many nodes of communications within the public

sphere. Committees are in constant connection (directly or indirectly) with other actors, such as the provincial government, aboriginal communities, other forest users, forest product retailers, and environmental organizations.

Pulling together all of these nodes of the public sphere, we can then re-imagine the public sphere in more contemporary terms as a constellation of public discourses that are in constant contact with each other and that compete for public attention and, in turn, inform public opinion. This understanding of the public sphere takes on a kind of abstract and 'subjectless' quality that operates over large-scales in a dense network of communication. This understanding of the public sphere is also very much in line with Habermas's later thinking on the public sphere as a 'wild constellation' of actors and discourses (1996). From this standpoint, private sector advisory committees cease to be a tangible and unitary public sphere, and become simply one of many nodes of public discourse on the forest sector – one that claims to act as an inclusive and deliberating body, but one among many such bodies.

Second, in contrast to some of the early optimism about the possibility of constructing favourable conditions for communicative action, contemporary writers in deliberative democratic theory, such as Young (2000) and Williams (1998), have successfully underlined the challenges associated with issues of inclusion and the limits to rational communication. These 'difference democrats' point to the challenges associated with cultural pluralism and social complexity, and the serious constraints to realizing a more robust discursive design within contemporary society. These authors challenged my thinking on the criteria for rational arguments. They also challenged my thinking about barriers to more inclusive public spheres and the structural and cultural impediments to meaningful involvement. In the context of this research project, these ideas provided the opportunity to expand normative criteria, for instance, by expecting a wider range of communicative styles (narrative, greeting, and rhetoric) within the deliberative space. But these authors also raised the bar for normative criteria by demonstrating, for instance, how forms of 'internal exclusion' can function to prevent people from taking an active role within a deliberative process.

Saddled now with a more abstract notion of the public sphere and a more contemporary understanding of the challenges associated with achieving a range of

normative criteria, a third set of more practical issues became apparent. Realizing that my case study of the public sphere in the forest sector should really encompass a vast network of interconnected public spaces (nodes), how was I to re-tune and re-think my assessment of private sector advisory committees? Furthermore, with this more expanded and nuanced set of normative criteria, is it even appropriate to develop a relentless critique against the obvious limits of this 'real life' deliberative setting?

In response to these challenges, this dissertation takes a more focused and more modest approach to an assessment of private sector advisory committees. I am grateful to the work of Eliasoph (1996) who helped me think more sociologically about the importance of interactional analysis as a realm of research between private opinion research and political economic analysis. Her work helped me to understand the value of a 'public-spirited moment' within the context of deliberative spaces. Where it once made sense to apply normative evaluation criteria to an entire process of public participation, it now seemed more reasonable to develop an understanding of how individual public moments are enhanced or discouraged. This analysis of 'moments' rather than 'processes' provided an opportunity to focus attention without over-swinging the axes of critique. Additionally, the empirical work provided a useful opportunity to challenge some of the normative assumptions within the social science literature on public participation. In this way, the critique in not so much focused on the empirical case as it is on the published literature.

Chapter summaries

The following chapters correspond with these revised project objectives. Chapter two unpacks the historical, socio-cultural and structural relationships associated with the now ubiquitous public advisory committee. Titled, 'the de-centering of environmental governance: a short history of public participation in Canadian Forest Management,' this chapter documents the history of public participation in forest management as public-policy response to the ebb and flow of environmentalism in North America. A movement away from government-led, multi-stakeholder, populist processes, toward industry and market-based processes, also marks this history. It involves the extensive deployment of industry-sponsored public advisory committees that are now a major feature within the

structure of environmental governance in Canada. This chapter describes these recent changes and explores several social facts that may have resulted in this more professionalized and de-centered form of public participation. For instance, cultural pluralism presents a challenge for contemporary societies to create new institutional arrangements that are capable of incorporating a much larger, and often contested, array of public values into a decision-making process. Similarly, as management systems become increasingly complex and science driven, citizens are becoming more aware that decisions are being made under conditions of uncertainty and conflicting scientific evidence. De-centered forms of public participation provide important opportunities for governments and industry to overcome these social challenges. Although this new form of public participation provides some remedy, certain side effects are also apparent. From the steering tactics of sponsoring agencies to the 'submersion' of discussion and debate, several implications of this historical trajectory are discussed.

In chapter three, the original project objective associated with process evaluation is modified to investigate the social construction of specific public moments. Titled 'the social anatomy of a public moment,' this chapter picks up on the idea of public spiritedness in democratic theory. These moments of public action serve to promote well-reasoned opinions that are informed by diverse sources of information, lively discussion and critical reflection. These moments are thought to emerge within the fluid dynamics of civil society – somewhere between the realms of state and citizen. In natural resource management, state actors have fostered public-spirited moments through numerous multi-stakeholder processes and public inquiries. But in spite of this role, these modes of public deliberation are fading. Spurred by market-driven governance systems (i.e., forest certification), and government decentralization, the locations where public-spirited moments take place are found increasingly under corporate sponsorship. As a dominant mode of public participation in natural resource management, local advisory processes offer certain dangers (agency steering tactics) but also certain potentials (in the form of local and contextualized knowledge). This chapter describes this historical trajectory of public deliberation in natural resource management and then investigates the case of forest sector public advisory committees in Alberta. Characterized by a de-centered and privatized mode of public action, these committees claim legitimacy from local

representations of public interest and a deliberative atmosphere that involves multiple perspectives. These claims to legitimacy are weakened, however, by modes of representation that are relatively ineffective and by forms of power and control within deliberative settings that highly circumscribe the emergence of public moments.

Chapter four takes on a more detailed theoretical discussion associated with the role of trust in contemporary society. Titled, 'trust and distrust in deliberative space,' the functional role of trust is explored in the context of small group deliberative activities. Trust plays an important role within modern society by extending confidence to individuals and institutions that control the levers of our complex social and environmental systems. For some theorists, trust is thought to be an integral component of the dense social networks that promote and stimulate conditions for prosperity. Trust is also thought to be an integral component to small-group activities, where decision maker and laypeople debate and negotiate policy and management issues. In sharp contrast to these positive notions of trust, some authors are beginning to articulate a more critical view of trust, to understand trust as a factor that causes citizens to become less critical and less questioning (de-politicized). Using observational and interview data from private-sector public advisory processes in the forest sector, the role of trust is explored as a possible liberating and/or inhibiting factor in the quality of group deliberation. Results from this case study show that, in some settings, high interpersonal and institutional levels of trust serve to limit the quality of group deliberations. In other settings, a high level of general trust, coupled with a more skeptical attitude among laypeople, gives rise to (what some risk theorists are calling) a critical trust. The paper concludes by recommending several ways that a more critical trust can be cultivated within private sector deliberative settings.

In chapter five, the threads of chapters two, three and four are combined to provide a general assessment of public advisory committees. Although such committees provide an important opportunity for local voices to influence public land management, they often remain stubbornly deficient in fostering conditions for public deliberation. The empirical evidence offers no quick conclusions about the effectiveness of advisory committees in Alberta. But one reality seems clear. Committees under private sponsorship are a dominant feature of the capitalist state, and improvements to discursive

design can make them more democratic. This dissertation is directed primarily toward this goal.

Following chapter five, the appendices provide several additional manuscripts that relate to the study of public advisory committees in Alberta. Appendix A provides a more detailed description of the theoretical orientation and methodology employed in this project. Appendix B provides an example of what Dryzek (1995) refers to as a pure critique. In this paper, advisory committees are assessed against some basic normative criteria associated with a European formulation of the public sphere. Appendix C presents a theoretical discussion of two dominant approaches to public participation: deliberative democratic theory and theories of public participation in natural resource management. Since a key audience for this dissertation will be the natural resource community, the appendix offers some general introduction to the field of deliberative democratic theory and to the similarities and differences between these very distinct, yet related disciplinary traditions.

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Chapter Two

THE DE-CENTERING OF ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE: A SHORT HISTORY OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN CANADIAN FOREST MANAGEMENT

Introduction

Recent attention to public participation in forest management represents a mainstreaming of democratic discourses within environmental governance. The World Bank Participation Source Book (The World Bank Group 1996) provides a prime example of this mainstreaming in their efforts to acknowledge the importance of local stakeholders in the decision-making process. Similarly, the President of the World Resources Institute states that two of the four basic tenets associated with ecosystem management include public dialogue and involved local communities (Lash 2002). Within Canada, the presence of democratic discourses in natural resource management parallels these international commitments. Several examples speak to this strong policy orientation; from the Senate Sub-Committee on the Boreal Forest (1999) calling for 'full participation of representatives of all forest stakeholders,' to the Canadian Council of Forest Ministers acknowledging 'fair and effective decision making' as a key component of sustainable forest management (2003). Although this focus on more democratic processes is relatively recent within the environmental policy arena, other sectors (such as rural and urban development) have enjoyed a much longer history of citizen-based involvement (Draper 1977). Within environmental policy, scholars have identified several moments of public participation policy innovation and subsequent reflection and retrenchment that correspond with key events within the environmental movement (such as Earth Day and the Earth Summit in Rio). These moments of enthusiasm and reflection provide a descriptive account and, as argued in this chapter, a trajectory of important policy developments that position citizen-based decision-making at the centre of environmental governance. From these histories we observe a general strengthening of resolve to justify and clarify the purposes for public participation along with the benefits and practical economic and social gains associated with public participation in environmental management.

A more recent trend in public participation relates to the emergence of citizen committees, or local-level advisory committees, designed to provide regular input into forest management and planning. These committee-based mechanisms for public participation vary in composition and purpose from one region to the next, but ideally, they comprise a diverse group of local citizens, who meet on an on-going basis to provide public comment and advice to policy makers and forest managers on local forest issues. Provincial governments sponsor some of these advisory committees, but a growing number are sponsored by the private sector. In Alberta, forest companies with land management responsibility sponsor 14 advisory committees that provide direct input into forest management planning. Private sector sponsorship is common in other provinces as well, where provinces have divested most of the operational responsibility for forest management onto the private sector – including public consultation processes. In addition to devolution, non-state market-driven governance systems are pushing control of public participation processes into the private sector. Some of these market-based governance systems place high demands on applicants to consult local citizens. In concert with forest companies, advisory committees assist in establishing locally appropriate indicators and monitoring frameworks for forest certification (CSA 2003). As a result of these social forces, company-sponsored advisory committees have become a dominant form of public participation in forest management across Canada.

During this period of growing enthusiasm, where policy makers, industry representatives, and third-party certifiers are espousing the virtues of participatory decision making, social theory has also taken a distinctively deliberative turn.[1] One such turn is observable in a movement within democratic theory that has become increasingly critical of more representative forms of democracy where the pinnacle of public participation is manifested in episodic and un-informed patterns of voting. Rather, deliberative democratic theory promotes places of exchange and debate that inform the public and promote revisions to public opinion. A multiplicity of public spheres is seen as forming the basis for authentic deliberative exchange, that in turn fuels changes in public

[1] Not only do we observe deliberative turns in democratic theory (Dryzek 2000), this interest in communication and understanding are also highly influential components of planning theory (Forester 1985), ecological modernization theory (Hajer 1995) and theories of risk society (Beck 1992). All of these theories maintain a strong resolve to position more radical discursive designs at the center of social steering mechanisms.

opinion, public values, and ultimately, political will. To the extent that deliberative processes seek to remedy episodic and ill-informed modes of public participation, deliberative democratic theory offers a useful lens through which contemporary developments in forest management can be understood.

This chapter provides a brief history of public participation in Canadian forest management. In addition to reviewing some of the trends and events that other authors have identified, it contributes a new chapter to this history by describing the de-centering of public participation in forest management. This recent history is marked by private sector sponsorship of public advisory committees. By situating these contemporary events into historical context, several questions arise. What has caused recent enthusiasm for advisory committees? Why have they become a dominant form of public participation in forest management? What are the implications for democratic decision making in Canada? Using deliberative democratic theory as an analytical lens, we explore the structure of this emerging deliberative landscape. The analysis demonstrates how de-centered participatory processes serve to mitigate problematic social facts such as cultural pluralism and scientific complexity. On the other hand, these processes tend to ghettoize forest management discourses in ways that perpetuate limited knowledge exchange and un-informed public opinion within the general public.

Three phases of environmentalism

The history of participatory governance in Canada is closely associated with the history of environmentalism in North America. According to McKenzie (2002), the first wave of environmentalism took place at around the turn of the 20th Century. John Muir, founder of the Sierra Club, and the naturalist Aldo Leopold, developed compelling and unique perspectives on the relationship between humans and nature that were grounded in their observations of industrialized society as it moved west across the North American landscape.

The second wave of environmentalism emerged out of similar concern for human and industrial expansion into the North American heartland, but the distinguishing feature was its popular appeal. Instead of identifying closely with middle class and elite values at the turn of the century, this new wave found popularity across the entire population

(McKenzie 2002; Parson 2001). During this period, several key events, including the publication of Rachel Carson's Silent Spring (1962) and Earth Day in 1970, contributed to a dramatic shift in popular ideology regarding the relationship between humans and nature. At the same time, citizens emerged from the war years with more disposable income and an appetite for outdoor recreational pursuits that fueled this sea change in public values.[2] Governments responded by establishing environment-oriented departments and agencies. Within civil society, the institutional response was equally dramatic, with thousands of fledgling environment-oriented non-governmental organizations (ENGOs) establishing programs and strategies to conserve and protect environmental resources. The broad agenda during this period focused on public opinion campaigns as the fundamental building block for establishing effective bulkheads against environmental degradation. A Sierra Club Bulletin (1972) summarizes this logic.

> A review of the Club's litigation however reveals that little that is conclusive has been won by law suits alone…In the long run the attitude of the courts toward environmental problems will simply reflect the consensus of society as a whole. Thus one hope depends on educating and persuading enough people. Our success depends upon popular interest in and sympathy for our goals (Quoted in Cristiansen-Ruffman and Stuart 1977:94).

The public participation discourse now so strongly rooted in the environmental governance discourse, in many ways, finds its origins in this second wave ideology that is based on respect for multiple voices and concern about balancing public values.

Although the third (and possibly fourth) wave of environmentalism is less well defined at this stage, it is characterized by "a certain flexibility and a recognition that any solution needs to make use of the marketplace" (McKenzie 2002:65). This more conciliatory tone marks a shift of orientation from winning the war of public opinion, to a focus on the creation of more precise and arguably more effective tools designed to place scarce political resources at key leverage points. These new points of opportunity are often thought to be market-oriented instruments such as certification, as well as technological solutions that move the discussion from end-of-pipe fixes to production and

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[2] Pioneering environmental sociologists during the same period echoed a philosophical shift in thinking within the discipline. In a direct challenge to classical sociological traditions that positioned humans in an exceptional position relative to the natural environment, the new ecological paradigm mapped out relationships where human existence became embedded within ecological systems and the interactions between these systems gained more specific attention (Catton and Dunlap 1978).

material fixes. In a sense, the campaign to rescue the environment has shifted in this third wave from the blunt instruments associated with *winning the war* of public opinion, to the more exacting instruments, highly specialized campaigns, that are focused on *winning individual battles.* These instruments are often more focused on precise outcomes that are engineered by advocacy coalitions in the policy and natural science community.

Public participation in forest management

With few exceptions, the history of public participation in forest management mirrors the three phases of environmentalism described above. The first documented case of environmental concern pertaining to the Canadian forest sector took place in 1906 (Drushka 2003; Rousseau 1996). In close proximity to the first wave of environmentalism, the environmental impacts associated with human settlement and industrial expansion throughout Canada became more evident. Railroad construction and prairie settlement in the west led to extensive changes to the physical landscape and as people began to express concern, politicians took notice. Sir Wilfred Laurier responded to this public concern and convened the first National Forest Convention. Held under the auspices of the Canadian Forestry Association, the convention dealt with three major concerns: logging and its impact on the environment, extensive forest fires that were making management practices difficult, and tree planting efforts on the prairies to provide badly needed fuel wood and to help ameliorate the harsh prairie climate (Murphy 1992). With the concept of sustained yield forestry, science-based forest management principles were starting to take shape and the first Canadian forestry schools were launched.

In the same way that environmental concerns took backstage during the war years, public concern over forest management in Canada suffered a long dry spell between 1906 and the 1960s. No significant national events took place for 50 years. By 1966, the second wave of environmentalisms was starting to register some impact on the forest sector. The federal Department of Forestry hosted a National Forestry Conference and then a follow-up conference was held in 1977 sponsored by the Canadian Forestry Association. By the late 1970s, an interest in more participatory policy approaches led to the development of the Forest Sector Strategy. In 1987, the newly established Canadian

Council of Forest Ministers hosted a Forestry Forum where delegates debated issues and made recommendations based on small group multi-stakeholder exercises. This session lacked large-scale participatory dimensions, but it did crack the door open for more deliberative settings where conservation-minded interests were represented. By the early 1990s, interest in a more comprehensive and participatory approach to policy development resulted in a far-reaching exercise leading up to the 1992 National Forest Strategy. The steering committee for this strategy was given broad powers to consult with the public nation wide. Up to 350 people contributed to this strategy at one of the first national forums (Rousseau 1996). Of the twelve issues most commonly raised at these forums, public participation and public awareness were among the top three. Several other national events took place during the 1990s that were associated with a more comprehensive and participatory environmental management regime. First, in 1991, the Canadian government announced a nation-wide Model Forest Program, designed to bring together a range of land managers and local stakeholders to develop a research program and to promote sustainable forest management in specific regions. There are 10 model forest locations nation wide and they receive federal funds on an annual basis to promote dialogue and partnerships. Second, in 1995, the Canadian Standards Association (CSA) established a certification system for sustainable forest management. This standard is used by third-party auditors against a set of criteria and indicators associated with good management practice. Integral to establishing this standard is a local-level advisory committee that is sponsored by the applicant to assist in defining the specific details associated with standards development. According to the CSA, this approach to performance standards "not only respects government-recognized criteria for SFM but it also lets the public have a say in how those [criteria] are interpreted for the local forest" (CSA 2003).

This increasingly participatory approach to forest management and policy development matches closely the events within the broader environmental movement during the same period. As the sea change in public values galvanized the environmental movement, governments and industries scrambled to respond to this growing public appetite for change. This second wave of environmentalism resulted in two distinct phases of innovation that are associated with participatory approaches to environmental

governance. The first phase came on the heels of an ideological shift and the initial flourish of popular environmental concern during the early 1970s. According to Dorcey and McDaniels (2001), this first phase of enthusiasm represented major shifts in policy and decision-making frameworks as policy actors and legislators sorted out the mechanics of a more inclusive governance structure. Major events such as the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Inquiry (Berger 1977), although considered still to be a model for open and inclusive deliberative processes (Fischer 2000), were very time consuming and costly to undertake. Again, in the 1980s, a second phase of innovative participatory processes began to gain momentum. Unlike the exhaustive inquiries that marked the previous decade, participatory mechanisms in this second phase were more streamlined and efficient. With the concept of sustainable development taking root and energizing popular interest, multi-stakeholder processes became popular, such as National and Provincial Round Tables (Howlett 1990; Dorcey and McDaniels 2001). These new processes operated on the basis of constituent representation, where spokespersons contributed to policy recommendations and debated the competing demands between a range of stakeholders. In reaction to these early inquiry-like processes, second-wave participatory mechanisms were distinctively more streamlined and efficient, with a much tighter relationship between process and outcomes.

The Alberta experience

Within Alberta, one can observe these two phases of innovation reflected in several major provincial initiatives over the last 40 years. The first phase started taking shape in 1967, when the Alberta government established the Advisory Committee on Pollution Control. Responding to a sea change in post-war public values, the government pulled together a committee of government, industry, and public representatives, along with a few academics to study and propose solutions to growing pollution problems across the province. Although by contemporary standards not a fully inclusive process, it did represent a first step toward policy formation outside of official legislative channels. Based on the success of this committee, its mandate and powers were broadened under a new Environmental Conservation Authority (ECA) that was formed in 1972. Scholars have observed the structure of this new body to be highly participatory as it made

extensive use of multiple public advisory committees. These committees were "semi-independent bodies comprised of volunteers who chose to study any issue they deemed important, passing resolutions accordingly" (Stefanick and Wells 2000:370). If doubts flickered about the ECA's enthusiasm for participatory approaches to environmental decision-making, they were extinguished by 1977 when the ECA hosted a larger international conference in Banff, Alberta, under the title 'Environment and Involvement.' The two-volume proceedings of this conference contain 50 papers based on emerging theoretical and philosophical arguments, as well as numerous case examples of participatory processes in Canada, the United States, and overseas. In the preface to these proceedings Sadler states:

> The growth of public participation in Canada, as elsewhere, represents a marked social and political innovation. A diverse array of formal channels are now open to individual citizens who wish to become involved in matters of public policy. This expansion in participatory opportunity and activity has occurred within a fairly short time frame and our knowledge of its nature and characteristics is consequently fragmented and incomplete (Sadler 1977).

This two-volume set contains some remarkable early contributions to the literature on public participation – dealing with issues like fundamental prerequisites for effectiveness, frameworks for evaluation research, and the role of the expert, that continue to be important themes in the literature today. In spite of this strong start to more participatory mechanisms in environmental governance, growing differences of opinion between the ECA and the Alberta Government over some major development projects, coupled with an economic downturn during the 1980s "led to a decline in the ECA's effectiveness as a voice of the public with respect to the environment" (Stephanik and Wells 2000:370).

While the first phase of enthusiasm for public participation waned in the early 1980s, the provincial government initiated several groundbreaking participatory mechanisms in natural resource management -- although somewhat more low key and smaller scale. In 1981, the Alberta Integrated Planning Advisory Committee represented the first formal mechanism for public participation in integrated resource management (Alberta Government 2002). This advisory process, along with numerous open houses, informal exchanges, and round table meetings formed the participatory foundation for the development of numerous local and sub-regional integrated resource plans. Aside from

these highly managerial and centralized approaches to resource planning, very little innovative participatory activity took place until the early 1990s.

The flurry of activity associated with more participatory approaches to environmental governance throughout the 1990s is set against a backdrop of dramatic industrial expansion within the resource sectors of Alberta. Within the forest sector, annual area harvested grew from less than 5 million m^3 in 1970, to more than 22 million m^3 in 1997. Similarly, petroleum industry drilling went from less than 20,000 wells in 1970 to more than 100,000 wells in 1995 (Timoney and Lee 2001; Schneider 2002). A dramatic increase in access was also underway, as roads were punched into wilderness areas to service these growing industrial interests. By the early 1990s, Alberta residents were beginning to express some concern about this unprecedented, large-scale, and often high profile industrial expansion (Pratt and Urquhart 1994). The highly publicized hearing associated with sighting a pulp mill in the northern Alberta community of Athabasca served to ignite public concern about the environmental consequences associated with this industrial expansion (Richardson et al 1993).

In response to this growing disquiet, several major participatory initiatives were launched during the 1990s. In 1990, the government launched a Round Table on Environment and Economy, to provide recommendations on how to proceed with the concept of sustainable development in the Alberta context. This initiative employed a multi-stakeholder process that was minimally inclusive. On the heels of this initiative, two other government programs employed a more inclusive and exhaustive participatory approach to land use planning and resource management. First, the Alberta Forest Conservation Strategy was launched in 1994 to consult with Albertans and to develop a long-term vision for the development of Alberta's forests. This process involved more than 800 Albertans associated with over 60 stakeholder groups that represented "essentially every organization in the province with an interest in forests" (Schneider 2001:9). The process consisted of an advisory group composed of more than 100 Albertans, a Steering committee composed of a diverse range of stakeholders, seven Strategic Issues Working Groups that reviewed key forest issues, and 16 Community Working Groups that met across the province to provide input into the process. Unfortunately the official government response to this strategy fell far short of the

recommendations and the expectations of the Albertans who participated. According to many of the representatives from environmental organizations, the Alberta Forest Legacy document showed little commitment to the vision for Alberta's forests that was developed within this process (Schneider 2001). Second, the Special Places 2000 program was launched in 1995 as an effort to complete a conservation system that would "represent the environmental diversity of the province's six natural regions by the end of 1998" (Alberta Environmental Protection 1992:5). Similar to the previous Conservation Strategy, SP 2000 employed an extensive public consultation model that included stakeholders from industry, government, environmental groups, and citizen committees. Although the process served to increase conservation areas from 45% to 80% of the province's ecological diversity, it failed to meet the expectations of many participants and cemented resolve within the environmental community that such time consuming and exhaustive multi-stakeholder processes provided no assistance in moving forward their environmental agendas (Stephanik and Wells 2000; AWA 2000).

The events associated with these multi-stakeholder populist approaches to citizen involvement are synonymous with second-wave enthusiasm for participatory processes across Canada (Dorcey and McDaniels 2001). While these processes were playing out during the 1990s, however, another wave of activity (a next chapter) was beginning to emerge as a key policy development in the history of participatory approaches to environmental governance.

Recent developments in public participation

Whereas government-led, multi-stakeholder, populist processes marked this second wave of participatory activity, a parallel and ultimately superseding wave of activity began to take shape. This third wave of participatory innovation is characterized by industry and market-based processes that bring together smaller groups of participants to deal with local and regional-level management and planning activities. Two important events, with distinct origins, manifest this new wave of enthusiasm.

The first event is the emergence of local-level public advisory committees as a key mechanism for public input into forest management and planning. In Alberta, this particular process first began in 1989, when several large forest companies established

monthly meetings with a diverse group of local residents to provide input into their forest management planning process. These groups served in advisory capacity only, with no binding decision-making authority over the company. By 1999, 14 such groups were meeting on a regular basis. Members typically included representatives from the local labour union, educational, medical, and religious institutions, recreation clubs, business community, and Aboriginal and environmental organizations. Members were not paid for their time, but the company often provided meals prior to the meeting. Typically those who do participate have the time, the intellectual curiosity or concern for forest management activities in their region, and the support of a constituent group to act as their representative (see Appendix A for more detail). Beyond Alberta, this mode of public participation has also flourished, with numerous local-level advisory groups in existence nation-wide. Their success attests to the value of such groups to on-going company operations and to the willingness of provincial regulators to promote this mode of involvement as a legitimate source of public oversight.

The second event is the global phenomenon of forest certification. By some estimates, forest certification has emerged since the early 1990s as the leading example of non-state market-driven governance systems. These governance systems are based outside of state-centered authority and draw from market systems that rely upon the private sector to voluntarily comply with one of several competing governance systems (Cashore 2002; Cashore et al 2003). Within Canada, the most popular performance-based system is projected to be the Canadian Standards Association sustainable forest management system (CSFCC 2003). Within this system, the principle role of public participation is to work with the applicant to develop values, objectives, indicators, and targets for the defined forest area. The performance standards associated with these values and objectives are predefined to some extent by the Canadian Council of Forest Ministers Criteria and Indicators of Sustainable Forest Management (CCFM 1995). CCFM criteria and indicators were developed during the mid-1990s in order to reflect, "broadly accepted Canadian values...and are consistent with the Montreal and Helsinki SFM [sustainable forest management] processes" (CSA 2003: ii). There are six CCFM criteria ranging from biodiversity to multiple benefits. Under each of these criteria are elements or subcategories under which national indicators are identified. For the CSA

process, realizing the diversity of forest eco-types and human activities from coast to coast, the CCFM criteria and indicator framework is maintained, but specific indicators must be revised to reflect the need for meaningful local application. Identifying these local-level indicators then is the primary mandate of the public involvement process. In other words, standards for CSA certification are defined in close cooperation with the local public over an 8 to 12 month period. Once the applicant achieves certification, the public advisory group continues to play a role in auditing and re-certification efforts.

Professionalizing and de-centering public participation

After reviewing the dominant features of environmentalism and public participation in environmental governance over the past 100 years, several important trends begin to emerge. First, we can observe a clear link between popular concern for environmental issues and public desire to participate in decision-making. In other words, the large-scale waves of enthusiasm for citizen involvement have been fueled by an overriding public concern for environmental issues. Whereas the first wave of environmentalism at the turn of the century produced no strong populist movement, the events of the second wave (late 1960s and 1970s) produced a strong desire on the part of concerned citizens to become more watchful and more involved in the management of environmental resources. As the events of these exhaustive first-generation deliberative processes played out during the 1970s, it became clear that a more entrenched and deeply held contest of values was beginning to emerge as a robust constellation of environmental discourses. By some estimates, this period of environmental activism was successful in greening the public sphere by introducing the language of environment that makes possible new forms of argument and contention (Torgerson 1999).

Second, we can observe a professionalization of public participation. The first wave of public participation created a set of management challenges associated with an increasing public appetite for hands-on environmental decision-making. Broad public debates during the 1970s gave way to more managerial and strategic mechanisms for public involvement during the 1980s and 1990s. This more cooperative and flexible nature of environmentalism's third wave (McKenzie 2002) paved the way for more efficient and streamlined processes associated with national round tables and multi-

stakeholder processes that became vogue during the 1990s. In a sense, this historical trajectory represents a reduction in scale of deliberative activity and a refinement in process efficiencies and outcomes – a kind of professionalization of deliberative mechanisms that has made such processes more affordable and more manageable, but also less populist and more expert driven.

Third, we can observe a gradual de-centering and privatizing of environmental governance in Canada. From first-generation participatory mechanisms, where public funds and government regulators were center stage, we observe a gradual transition to more private and market-based initiatives. Specifically, this transition is marked by the extensive deployment of local-level public advisory committees that are now a major feature within the structure of environmental governance in Canada. In acknowledging the relevance and the value of this dominant mode of public participation, the CSA has placed these small-scale public advisory committees at the center of their standards development process, resulting in a significant shift away from more centralized and state-sponsored activities. Given the magnitude of this historical trajectory, some scholars have already begun to take notice[3]. For instance, in their assessment of the long-term trends in downsizing and devolving, Dorcey and McDaniels (2001) see an increasing reliance on business and civil society in the government of environmental resources. Similarly, Cashore et al (2003) note the growth of market-driven governance systems within the forest sector. Urquhart (2001) also sees a trend away from integrated resource management toward ecosystem management and public participation, both of which are increasingly situated within the administrative control of private corporations. Recent work by Davidson and MacKendrick (2004) also support Urquhart's claims by demonstrating how the discourse associated with integrated resource management has shifted from one of government as manager and controller to one of government as visionary and facilitator – effectively creating the regulatory space required to allow for more de-centered participatory processes.

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[3] Decentralization has been a strong theme in the planning literature for some time (Friedmann 1973), and it has gained more recent popular appeal in the natural resources literature (Gary et al 2001; Ribot 2002). However, unlike the decentralization literature, which advocates for local-level decision-making and authority, the de-centering of public participation brings with it little if any authority. These committees are mostly advisory, with varying degrees of influence over the decision-making process.

Historical drivers

To this point, we have focused on a description of the events leading up to the professionalization and privatizing of participatory mechanisms in environmental governance. Certainly there are counter trends along this historical path that are not documented or accounted for adequately in this brief description, but this description lends support to a growing body of literature that documents the de-centering of environmental governance. In as much as this account represents an accurate description of events, it remains inadequate as a sociological analysis because if fails to account for the sources of this historical trajectory. In other words, why has the history of environmental governance turned in favour of these recent developments?

In exploring some of the drivers of this history, there are several possible approaches. One approach might be to explore these historical trajectories in the context of a capitalist state. This approach, with its focus on the increasing privatization of public life, is a well-established theme within social theory and one that possesses some interpretative value in this context. For instance, critical theorists argues that this history represents an example where the public sphere is transformed in fundamental ways to facilitate and retrench dominant industrial and market relations in the face of increasing environmental concern and public scrutiny (Gaventa 1980). In addition to this historical analysis, another analytical approach to this history involves a closer examination of specific social conditions that stimulate or inspire more discursive events. Certain social conditions have provided a catalyst for more professionalized and de-centered forms of public participation and this analysis can sharpen our understanding of these interactions. Two of the most widely cited social conditions within deliberative democratic theory relate to increasingly pluralist public values and increasing levels of scientific complexity and uncertainty.

The problem of cultural pluralism

As a defining feature of contemporary society, cultural pluralism creates the social conditions associated with deep conflict (Bohman 1996) or messy problems (Lachapelle et al 2003), that are typified by irreconcilable value differences, little scientific agreement, limited time and resources, asymmetrical power relations, and acute social

inequality. Theorists who are particularly tuned in to these dangers, stress the need for more inclusive public spheres where public reasons can become more pluralist (Bohman 1996) and where forms of argument can extend beyond simplistic understandings of rational debate (Fraser 1992; Young 2000). In response to this expanding cultural pluralism, these scholars observe a broadening of the public sphere to include a range of citizens that self-organize around an alternative and often-dissenting public discourse. Among the more common realms of dissenting discourses in recent history include the organization of women, African Americans, Aboriginal people and gays and lesbians.

In the history of environmental governance, we can observe several moments where cultural pluralism began to take shape. Obviously the most dramatic period of pluralization took place during the 1960s and 1970s. From this sea change in public values, we observe an irreversible trend toward the language of environment in the discourse of natural resource management. From this point, the history of public participation became a history of challenges and changes within natural resource management systems. The second wave of environmentalism catalyzed this transformation that is still being worked out in practical terms (from the initial exhaustive efforts of the 1970s to the more streamlined and market-driven efforts in more recent years). One of the most tangible impacts of cultural pluralism in this history of environmental governance is the proliferation of environmental non-governmental organizations (ENGOs). By some estimates, there were more than 13,000 ENGOs in developed countries by the end of the 1980s (McKenzie 2002), and many of the larger organizations had found their way into the back rooms and boardrooms of policy makers. By the 1990s, this environmental movement had become a force that commanded considerable attention. The constellation of ENGOs had become so effective in their campaigns focusing on the deepening ecological crisis that the competing scientific claims between environmental organization, governments and industries had taken on a distinctly public flavour. "Environmentalism was labeled the life and death PR battle of the 1990s" (McKenzie 2002:71).

Recognizing that the ENGOs enjoyed a kind of grass roots support that was tied into a set of values often shared by an increasingly urbanized population, small town and industry groups determined that grass roots support within their own constituency would

be required to counter this increasingly successful environmental discourse. Scientific uncertainty, a lack of information, and deep values differences, favoured more cautious approaches to environmental management that held clear and often negative consequences for resource-based industries and resource-based communities. As these dissenting discourses gained ground, dominant interests within resource management began to rely on their own sources of grass roots support to gain legitimacy for industrial and community interests. Under increasing pressure, community and industry grass roots support emerged in direct opposition to competing local and non-local discourses.

A series of recent events in Hinton, Alberta, bring this history into view. In 1996, Cardinal River Coals announced plans to expand their strip mining activities to a new site known as Cheviot. This announcement initiated an extensive environmental review process with both provincial and federal stages of approval. During the public hearings in 1997, environmental organizations were effective in slowing the approval process but approvals were finally given later that year. In response, environmental organizations sued the government for not taking adequate account of alternative economic activities or cumulative environmental impacts from other local industries such as logging and oil and gas development. These court cases, along with international pressure, were instrumental in creating significant delays. In addition, declining coal prices caused Cardinal River Coal to delay further coal developments indefinitely.[4] For the local residents, the ability of these environmental organizations to effectively disrupt their economic livelihoods and their way of life stimulated a profound resolve to fight back with the same kind of grass roots support enjoyed by urban-based environmental organizations.

In the years following these events, two local 'wise use' or 'share' movements emerged in opposition to several external threats. One of these groups, called the Alberta Council for Sustainable Communities and the Environment (ACSCE), backed largely by local mining union members and community businesses, was established expressly in opposition to other special interest groups in the resource-based debate. In response to what they observed to be highly rhetorical and emotional fear mongering, ACSCE objectives were to promote the responsible and timely management of resources as

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[4] With increasing coal prices in early 2004, the mine is again slated to re-open pending the successful resolution of new environmental appeals from local ENGOs.

impacted on the economic well-being of resource-based communities (ACSCE 2003). The other group, called the Alberta Forest Community Coalition, backed largely by local forest industry union members, municipalities and community businesses, was established to pressure the provincial government on potential negative changes to the forest industry in response to the ongoing soft-wood lumber dispute with the United States (AFCC 2003). Both of these groups enjoyed grass roots support and a values orientation that in most respects brought them head to head with environmental organizations.

Within the forest sector, the proliferation of industry sponsored public advisory committees can be viewed as another iteration of these home-based initiatives. Some committees, of course, would resist being characterized as simply another advocacy group for industry, but the weight of evidence to date suggests that members of public advisory committees in Alberta, on average, reflect the value orientation of their industry sponsors. Compared to members of environmental organizations, professional foresters, and the general public, advisory committee members hold value orientations across a wide range of forest issues that are closely related to the value orientations of professional foresters (McFarlane and Boxall, 2000). Given that professional foresters are largely responsible for coordinating the activities of public advisory committees, this finding is not unexpected. In fact, a closer examination reveals a great deal of overlap between industry-produced information, and the information that is discussed within advisory committees (Parkins et al 2001; Appendix A). Advocates for the forest sector often see the advisory committee as an effective tool for communication and for bring the local public 'on side' with knowledge and understanding.

In the context of cultural pluralism, the challenge for democratic societies is to create new institutional arrangements that are capable of incorporating a much larger, and often contested, array of public values into the decision making processes. The emergence of small-scale committees within civil society and within the private sector in recent years represents an evolution of institutional arrangements that are designed to address this problem. Emboldened by the success of ENGOs, the business community has taken up their version of grass roots support and has entered the public sphere from a position of strength within their host towns and communities. If we imagine the public

sphere in terms of a wild complex or as a theater for deliberating and debating the issues of the day, then these new nodes of social organization, these new sources of retrenchment and reorganization, simply represent what is understood to be one component of a much larger constellation of discourses on environmental governance. Whereas the theorists who are concerned with issues of cultural pluralism call for deliberative spaces that are more accommodating of pluralist values and forms of rationality, movements to de-center the public sphere provide a solution to cultural pluralism by offering space for more homogenous value systems to flourish and find a strong footing within the larger constellation of discourses.

At one end of the spectrum, forest sector advisory committees may represent a diverse set of public values that fuel a vigorous discussion and debate about issues of public concern. At the other end, forest sector advisory committees may represent a narrow range of views. In both instances, de-centered deliberative spaces offer an opportunity to address the challenges of diverse and competing public values by either engaging some of this diversity at the local level or by challenging this diversity within the larger public sphere.

The problem of complexity and uncertainty

If public advisory committees represent one response to the problem of pluralism, it is also possible to understand the proliferation of these committees as a response to scientific complexity and uncertainty. The juxtaposition of local and lay involvement in decision making with science driven forest management systems provides an interesting, if not paradoxical, combination of policy frameworks within the forest sector. On one hand, public advisory committees provide a mechanism for the forest sector to secure social license within the friendly terrain of host communities. On the other hand, public advisory committees may also play a role in shoring up the scientific arguments that underpin modern forest management practices. These ideas allow us to view public advisory committees in the context of scientific complexity and uncertainty.

In contrast to neo-liberal theories of growth that generally espouse improvements in scientific rationality as an appropriate fix for modern environmental problems, another stream of thought tends to favour a more critical rationality, or a reflexive rationality, that

relates in large measure to the relationship between experts and lay people. This reflexive approach begins with a specific notion about the nature of modern scientific knowledge and the field of scientific practice. For the deliberative democrat, a crucial challenge to democratic improvements relates to increasing system complexity. For instance, nuclear power plants and their associated power grids are characterized as "tightly coupled" systems requiring extensive scientific expertise and highly advanced management controls (Perrow 1984). Chemical plants, natural ecosystems, food systems, financial systems, and many other systems that sustain modern societies are now being managed at levels of complexity requiring constantly increasing levels of specialization and expert knowledge. As systems become more complex and expert-based decision making systems become established, public access becomes fragile and the value of lay knowledge becomes less relevant. If the complexity of modern systems were in fact perfectly coupled with the knowledge and ability of experts, then the relevance of democratic governance structures could be in doubt. But, along with this trend toward increasing complexity, we also observe a counter trend toward increasing uncertainty and risk management decision-making. On this second trend, the potential for lay involvement and decision-making begins to emerge in order of magnitude with scientific complexity and uncertainty.

Within the forest sector, considerable uncertainty exists regarding the state of the forest resource and the ability of the system to provide for human and non-human needs over the long term. In sharp contrast to government and industry pundits (Kaga 2002; Lazar 2003), Timoney and Lee (2001) present a compelling case that ecological degradation is a major problem brought on by oil and gas development, forestry, and agriculture. Others have also echoes this concern. Schindler (1998) claims that climate warming, stratospheric ozone depletion, and acid precipitation along with other human activities such as clear-cut logging are having a devastating impact on boreal landscapes and waters. Even within the forestry profession, there is considerable uncertainty about the adequacy of current forest management practices (McFarlane and Boxall 2000). Acknowledging this uncertainty, Ludwig et al. (1993) contend that scientific consensus concerning the exploitation of natural resources such as fish or forests will never be achieved. This is precisely because "the complexity of the underlying biological and

physical systems precludes a reductionist approach to management" (1993:17). Much of the problem relates to the sheer size of these systems and the inability to institute adequate controls and experimental replications.

Launching from the social facts associated with complexity and uncertainty, several scholarly traditions have attempted to rearticulate the central role of politics in environmental decision making. For some scholars, the challenge becomes one of bringing a small group of citizens up to a level of technical competence to effectively discuss and debate scientific issues. Dahl's (1989) notion of the 'minipopulus' serves as a way to reduce the cognitive disparities between lay people and experts in an effort to allow a broader public debate about the benefits and costs associated with specific complex systems. Focused specifically on the quality of scientific discourse, the minipopulus serves as a kind of scientific training ground for lay people related to complex systems of concern. Funtowicz and Ravetz (1985; 1994), on the other hand, propose a more radical form of citizen engagement. In contrast to traditional scientific peer review, which is extended to a select group of citizens in Dahl's formula, post-normal science draws a concept of relativism from physics and the social sciences and an awareness that science is conducted by social actors influenced by power and social relations (Kuhn 1962). According to these authors, a turn to post-normal science is required precisely when complex systems are involved. Not unlike fish and forest ecosystems discussed above, complex systems are marked by contradiction and continuous novelty. Under such conditions of scientific uncertainty, Funtowics and Ravetz propose a necessary paradigm shift in the way science is conducted and in the way decisions about complex systems are made.

> Emergent complexity provides a theoretical justification for post-normal science, in which the peer group for quality assurance is expanded beyond the certified experts to include all those with a stake in the issue. This concept helps us to appreciate that there is no single perception providing a comprehensive or adequate vision of the whole issue, nor any particular criteria of quality that can hegemonically exclude all others (1994:578).

Two key issues are identified here. First, the extension of peer communities does not suggest the displacement of traditional scientific peer review, but an expansion of actors to those who might be more intimately acquainted with the landscape such as local

fishermen in the Atlantic fisheries, cattle ranchers in the oil and gas fields of Alberta, or trappers in the boreal forest. These extended peers would be central to the construction of knowledge around environmental risks that are both highly complex and subject to continuous change. Second, along with extended peers would come extended facts in the form of local knowledge, anecdotes, beliefs, and even the perceptions of local people regarding the environmental impact of various industrial activities. These features have the effect of democratizing science through a process of broadening the range of political actors. Unlike Dahl who seeks to raise cognitive abilities to a scientific level, this formula extends out to particular and unique forms of local knowledge that are generally beyond the scope of normal scientific inquiry.

Faced with these social facts associated with complexity and uncertainty, theorists argue that, in important ways, lay people must be brought into the decision making process. Pellizzoni (2003) states when facts and values are in conflict the only opportunity for mutual understanding may be to look for practical, local answers, based on insights from a diversity of local actors. Similarly, Nowotny et al (2001) claim that more highly contextualized knowledge is not only inevitable and relevant, but even scientifically beneficial.

Within the context of the forest sector, perhaps the best example of these new institutional arrangements can be observed between experts and lay people within non-state market-driven governance systems. Early research on these emergent systems shows the forest sector leading other industrial sectors in the development of policy frameworks, guidelines, and standards (Cashore 2002). This leadership is due in large measure to the competition between leading certification initiatives. Whereas some of this competition relates to industry-backed versus ENGO-backed initiatives, it also relates to more fundamental differences associated with how scientific uncertainty is understood and incorporated into the decision making process. Authors have identified significant variation in the institutional design of forest certification standards that, in part, represent divergent approaches to dealing with the problem of scientific uncertainty (Auld and Bull 2003; Parkins 2003). The CSA forest certification standard, described earlier, places public advisory committees at the centre of the standards development process for every applicant. In concert with a public advisory committee, applicants establish a suite of

goals, objectives, and indicators that a third party auditor uses to evaluate forest management practices. In contrast to the expert-driven model for decision making in other certification systems, Auld and Bull (2003) suggest that the stakeholder model employed by the CSA puts a great deal of responsibility on advisory committee participants to evaluate and scrutinize the quality of specific standards. They also state that "for the CSA, uncertainty was also used to justify flexibility; however given the CSA institutionalized principles of public participation, flexibility led to a balance of decision-making authority between organizations seeking certification and local stakeholders" (2003:57). For companies seeking certification through CSA, part of their decision to choose this particular market-driven governance system relates to the way in which they prefer to address the problem of uncertainty. In choosing a local stakeholder decision-making approach over an expert-based system, they become predisposed toward the democratizing of environmental governance as a response to complexity and uncertainty.[5]

The proliferation of company-sponsored advisory committee processes began in Canada in the early part of the 1990s. Much of this enthusiasm within the industry began in the post-Bruntland and post-Rio phases of the sustainable development discourse, when governments and industries were taking more interest in measuring and monitoring progress on a broad range of development targets. Within Alberta, forest companies were encouraged by the provincial government to initiate more extensive public consultation processes around forest management planning. This intensification of public participation quickly translated into company-sponsored public advisory committees. Within several years of this initial enthusiasm, non-state market-driven systems added fuel to the fire. Now both government and non-government sources place increasing responsibility on forest companies to engage lay people in the decision making process. Although other factors were certainly strong drivers in pushing environmental governance systems

[5] In theory, Auld and Bull (2003) are correct in stating that CSA principles of public participation led to a balance of decision-making authority between organizations seeking certification and local stakeholder. However, this statement requires some empirical exploration. Recent research suggests that this balance may be difficult to achieve. In an exhaustive review of public advisory processes in the United States, Beierle and Cayford (2002) excluded company-driven processes without explanation. Readers can only assume that deliberative processes so closely tied to private interests were of no interest to the authors.

toward the local, social facts associated with complexity and uncertainty in forest sciences appear to be a persistent challenge.

To the extent forest companies are taking responsibility for establishing local forest management standards, lay involvement provides a mechanism to deal with scientific uncertainty and to marshal the necessary social consensus that is required to carry on with business. In some settings, these deliberative spaces might become an important source of post-normal science, where alternative sources of knowledge and understanding are radically incorporated into the decision making process. This mode of scientific inquiry and extended peer review will include a heavy dose of lay knowledge and lay values into the deliberative process. Alternatively, these deliberative spaces may represent little more than Dahl's 'training ground for lay people,' where deliberators receive an education about forest science. Of course, we can then ask questions about the content and quality of that education. From the radical view to the feudalized view of public deliberation, the general logic remains relatively constant. Local deliberative processes offer a compelling opportunity to confront scientific uncertainty and to find ways of moving beyond gridlock and indecision.

Summary and implications

The history of Canadian forest management represents an important case study in the history of environmental governance. As this chapter shows, the contours of environmental governance closely mirror the contours of environmentalism over the last century. From the populism of the 1970s, an exhaustive and comprehensive approach to public consultation emerged that continues to enjoy some prominence in the contemporary literature (Fischer 2000). As the environmental movement matured, approaches to public participation also became more streamlined and more efficient. This professionalizing of the participatory process resulted in extensive government-sponsored round tables and other multi-stakeholder processes at the provincial and federal levels. A de-centering and professionalizing of participatory processes in environmental governance characterizes the most recent phase of this history. Transitioning from the early 1990s, where government sponsored multi-stakeholder processes such as Lands For Life (Ontario), LRMP (British Columbia), and Alberta Forest Strategy (Alberta), are now

giving way to private and market-driven systems of participatory governance, local-level public advisory committees represent a dominant institutional structure under this most recent phase of environmental governance.

This chapter also articulates a role for cultural pluralism and scientific uncertainty in precipitating this particular historical trajectory. Emergent participatory processes provide some remedy for the problem of cultural pluralism by organizing and managing public opinion in local settings. They also allow for the extension of scientific peer communities into the local context, providing a potential mechanism for democratizing the scientific process and dealing with the problem of scientific complexity and uncertainty.

As an extension of this analysis, there are several implications for environmental governance in Canada. First, the movement away from state sponsored processes (in the form of public inquiries, round tables, and sector strategies) to local level and privately sponsored initiatives (in the form of public advisory committees) are a response to specific social facts. However, as we observe environmental organizations taking on more strategic and focused campaigns to 'win the battle' rather than 'winning the war' of public opinion, and as we observe the private sector and local communities respond in-kind with grass roots movements, these constellations of discourses take on a kind of subterranean quality. The process of de-centering serves to submerge the public sphere in ways that are largely disconnected from the larger realm of public discourse. This ghettoizing effect, results in minimal impact on civil discourses and public opinion formation. The average citizen rarely hears these debates, never has an opportunity to understand the issues and infrequently reshapes and revises personal opinions. In contrast to public discourses on health and education, this issue relates in large part to the ghettoized nature of political discourse related to environmental governance, but it also relates to the professionalized nature of public participation activities. As participatory activities become more efficient and streamlined, they also tend to lose their effectiveness as mechanisms for informing public debate. Beierle and Cayford (2002), demonstrate that mechanisms such as negotiated rule making and conflict resolution procedures tend to be less effective at incorporating public values and, in turn, informing public opinion. Crucial to modern constructions of the public sphere, the link between these competing

discourses and communication upwards toward legislative and administrative spheres depends largely on the ability of these discourses to inform public opinion. In other words, streams of communication within the public sphere must at regular intervals, "coalesce into bundles of topically specified public opinions"(Habermas 1996:360). To the extent that environmental discourses become de-centered, sub-terrainian, and ghettoized, they also lose the opportunity to recapture the attention of civil society and re-energize the public discourse.

In contrast to these less optimistic features associated with de-centered participatory processes, this particular historical trajectory bodes well for improving the scientific field in an era of acute complexity and uncertainty. The challenges associated with translating scientific research into public policy is revealed to be increasingly intractable as system complexity and deep values differences force decision making toward the local. Local and contextualized knowledge are becoming increasingly valuable remedies to these problems. What works for one location, may not work for another. To the degree that advisory committees become effective as sources of knowledge exchange and political interaction, forcing experts to question conventional wisdom and lay people to question expert assumptions, they may serve as an important source for re-invigorating the public sphere. Within historical context, these public spheres serve to challenge authoritative voices within society by generating independent sources of knowledge and by making that knowledge available to public discourse. As a source of local and contextualized knowledge that informs and influences the decision making process, local-level advisory committees may continue to provide a similar service to the public sphere.

The de-centering of public deliberation provides a challenging paradox. On one hand, de-centered participatory processes tend to erode the level of public discussion, debate, and opinion formation within civil society. Compared to other social issues, forest and land use issues rarely make the evening news. For the private sector, grass roots support within host communities helps to secure good will and social license, but the sub-terrainian qualities of this public sphere, may not translate into more favourable public opinions within society as a whole. For advocates of 'civic science', the outcomes may be more optimistic. If advisory committee processes such as those sponsored by market-

based certification systems compel forest managers to deal with uncertainty more democratically, then the clouds around de-centered environmental governance may in fact precipitate a more reflexive mode of scientific practice.

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Chapter Three

THE SOCIAL ANATOMY OF A PUBLIC MOMENT

Vignette

On a dark and chilly winter evening in January, I drive my car several hours west of Edmonton, Alberta, to a bustling resource-dependent community of 7,000 residents. As a monthly journey, my travels allow me to observe the proceedings of a forest-industry sponsored public advisory committee meeting. The town emerges from the rolling hills of snow and forest cover like so many other communities across northern Alberta with signs announcing major roadside services such as restaurants, accommodation, and gas stations. I pull into a visitor center and park my car in an empty parking lot, making my way to a classroom where residents are beginning to gather for their monthly meeting. Chalkboards on the walls, hard chairs, fluorescent lights, and a corner table with donuts and coffee meet committee members as they take their place around the table. As meeting-time approaches, it becomes obvious that attendance will be sparse. Seven of 22 members make an appearance. On the agenda: a review of previous meeting minutes, a presentation on long-term access planning from a forest industry official, the filling of vacant committee positions, an update from the chair on new provincial forest regeneration standards, and a discussion on future agenda items. The meeting begins with the chair, a forest company official, leading people through the agenda items. Presentations are made followed by short periods of exchanges between committee members, mostly for clarification; certainly no lengthy discussions and definitely no debate. Finally the chair opens the floor for discussion about future agenda items. For the first time in the meeting, the conversation becomes lively, and some energy returns to the participants as they discuss the future of the group itself. Members start asking pointed question. Why is attendance so low? What is the purpose of our group? Why should we meet on a regular basis if there are no "real" issues to discuss? If public involvement is important to the forest industry, is this process serving that purpose? Over the next 20 minutes a public-spirited discussion ensues.

Introduction

This short vignette illustrates a single meeting of one advisory committee in central Alberta. The committee is responsible for providing ongoing public input into forest management and planning in their region. Far from unique, however, in 2002, there were 14 advisory committees in Alberta, and many more nation-wide. Although the vignette describes a single case, many of these committees face similar challenges. In their ideal form, citizen committees feed local concerns and values into the decision making process on issues such as recreation, aesthetics, and community development. But being so closely tied to company interests, are such groups a legitimate form of involvement? Can these committees develop a spirited public talk about issues associated with forest management in their community? Is it possible to sustain alternative points of view? This chapter explores these questions of individual agency, representation, and autonomy within the case of privately sponsored advisory committees in Alberta.

Since the early 1980s, notions of citizen involvement and environmental governance have become closely paired. There are several reasons for this movement toward greater lay involvement in planning and policy-making initiatives. First, as a result of the environmental movement in the 1960s and 1970s, the social consensus around natural resource use began to erode. Urbanization, increasing recreational activities, along with significant increases in resource exploitation lead to a sea change in public opinion regarding the value of environmental resources.[1] In light of these changing social values, the management of environmental resources became a much more challenging task for decision makers. In response, large-scale experiments in citizen involvement such as the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Inquiry (Berger 1977) marked the first phase of lay involvement in environmental governance. As the environmental movement of the 1960s and 1970s matured, these expensive and time-consuming processes gave way to more measured and cost-effective multi-stakeholder processes like national and provincial round tables (Howlett 1990). Buoyed by a new sense of commitment to the principles of sustainable development, governments and non-

[1] This shift in public values is also noted in sociological theory with a radical challenge to move from a sociology where the natural world doesn't matter (human exceptionalism paradigm), to a sociology that focuses attention on the linkages between the social and the natural worlds (new ecological paradigm) (Catton and Dunlap 1978).

governmental organizations engaged in numerous multi-stakeholder processes. These new processes operated on the basis of constituent representation where spokespersons contributed to policy recommendations and debated competing demands between diverse stakeholders.

More recently, this turn toward more efficient approaches to citizen involvement in natural resource management has given way to a new phase in citizen involvement. This phase is described in chapter two as a privatized and de-centered mode of environmental governance. From first-generation participatory mechanisms where public funds and government regulators took center stage, we observe a gradual transition to more private and market-based initiatives. Specifically, this transition is marked by the extensive deployment of industry-sponsored public advisory committees that are now a major feature within the structure of environmental governance in Canada.[2]

At each phase within the evolution of participatory processes, researchers have developed a wide range of approaches to assess democratic quality. Some researchers have taken a normative approach (Kemp 1985; Renn et al. 1995; DeMarchi and Ravetz 2001), where specific principles are identified from philosophical or theoretical bases. Alternately, other researchers have taken a more user-based approach (Tuler and Webler 1999; Shindler and Neburka 1997; Chess 2000) where criteria are identified by the participants or by other methods of applied research. In general, normative and user-based criteria focus on three core elements of the democratic process: (1) an adequate representation of public interests and concerns, (2) the quality of discussion and debate, and (3) the outcomes of public processes in terms of social learning and the ability to influence decisions.

This chapter explores the emergence of a privatized and de-centered form of citizen engagement, in the form of forest-company sponsored public advisory committees in Alberta, Canada. As a nascent form of citizen engagement, there is little published material on these 14 committees. Preliminary research, based on survey data and preliminary observations (Appendix A), suggests that these committees achieve a certain level of democratic quality. They are intended to be representative of local public

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[2] For examples of de-centering and environmental governance, see Dorcey and McDaniels 2001; Cashore et al 2003; Urquhart 2001; Davidson and MacKendrick 2004.

interests, they access wide-ranging sources of science and policy information, and they address problems that might otherwise not arise within decision-making channels between government and industry. By undertaking a more in-depth analysis, this chapter provides a closer and more intimate perspective on committee functioning and activity. The notion of a positive public moment as a key moment of social interaction is employed as the primary analytical framework and a point of departure into discussions of public representation and group autonomy.

A theory of public deliberation

Deliberative democratic theory provides an important backdrop for understanding the quality of democratic processes within small group settings. The theoretical ideas associated with inclusiveness, deliberation and opinion formation match closely with the intended outcomes of many small deliberative bodies. In general terms, privately sponsored advisory committees are not decision-making bodies. They are locales where public citizens are free to share ideas, absorb new information, reflect on personal perspectives, and revise opinions in light of new evidence. Moreover, deliberative democratic theory provides important theoretical perspectives on the problems of representation and the coercive tendencies of small-group settings that are not always fully explored in other fields of research.[3]

The deliberative turn in democratic theory is based on a critique of more episodic forms of democratic participation, where citizens participate through voting and where public deliberation is severely limited to issue 'sound bites' and popularity contests. The literature is concerned with "debate and discussion aimed at producing reasonable, well-informed opinion in which participants are willing to revise preferences in light of discussion, new information, and claims made by fellow participants" (Chambers 2003:309). Since the early 1990s, deliberative democratic theory has flourished into an

[3] The literature on citizen involvement and environmental governance is vast. Although the linkages between various disciplines make it difficult to categorize this literature, more influential areas of research include: decentralization and privatization in environmental management (Friedmann 1993; Ribot 1999), collaborative management and community forestry (Wondolleck and Yaffee 2000; Gray et al. 2001); collaborative and transformative learning (Daniels and Walker 2001; Sinclar and Diduck 2001), social dimensions of forest management (Schindler and Neburka 1997; Duinker 1998) environmental arguments in deliberative democratic theory (Eckersley 1999; Dryzek 2000); and social risk assessment (Fischer 1990; McDaniels et al. 1999).

influential body of work (Dryzek 1990; Calhoun 1992; Benhabib 1996; Chambers 1996; Bohman 1996; Elster 1998; Dryzek 2000). This work is focused on particular settings as well as more diffuse networks that extend throughout civil society as places where individuals can inform each other about matters of public interest and develop public-spirited opinions on a range of social issues. Whereas the public sphere was understood historically as a geographically specific and unique locale associated with openness, inclusiveness, and free-ranging debate, more contemporary notions of the public sphere are embedded within the fluid dynamics of civil society – public spaces that are situated between the state and the private life of citizens. For instance, Habermas suggests that the public sphere is an;

> open and inclusive network of overlapping, subcultural publics having fluid temporal, social, and substantive boundaries. The currents of public communication are channeled by mass media and flow through different publics that develop informally inside associations. Taken together, they form a "wild" complex that resists organization as a whole (1996:307).

Distinct from instrumental procedures for consensus building or decision-making, deliberative democratic theory presents a strong normative claim for the supremacy of personal opinions that have assumed a measure of critical reflection. This reflection is brought about by encounters with claims and counter-claims, arguments and counter-arguments, and the rhetorical and personal reflections of others who observe issues from perspectives other than one's own. At the end of these discursive encounters, personal opinions are likely to be more measured, perhaps more balanced, more understanding of others, and ideally more enlightened.

An important task for social research is to understand how these critical interactions take place between diverse and often-contested points of view. It focuses attention on a realm of inquiry that is positioned between two popular social science themes. On one hand, private opinion research gains some insight into personal views on specific issues but offers a limited understanding of how those opinions are derived. On the other hand, political sociology deals with the existing legislative and political systems where people live and work, but a limited understanding of how certain social interactions can affect change. According to Eliasoph (1996), another important area of social research resides within the zone of interaction between personal opinion and social

structure; the inner and the outer; the micro and the macro. For her, what matters is "the way that citizens mingle and interact – civic practices that enable citizens to engage in freewheeling political conversation in everyday contexts" (1996:266). Within an empirical context, a study of this middle ground of interaction might be characterized as an exploration of what Elisasoph defines as a 'public-spirited moment.'

In the vignette at the beginning of this chapter, we observe some glimpses into a world of public deliberation where public-spirited moments are infrequent. Noting that the ideal type conditions of inclusiveness, non-coercion, critical argument and reflection (espoused as basic criteria for public deliberation) are often fleeting moments within formal public settings, the task of social researchers who employ this criteria may not be to apply these conditions broadly to an entire case, but to investigate the single events, the moments when energy returned to the room, when multiple perspectives enjoyed a voice at the table, when an exploration of alternatives was entertained. As a theory of deliberation is applied in 'real world' settings, investigating the conditions associated with promoting or inhibiting such public moments becomes a central activity. It allows us to understand and appreciate the value of these moments in the formulation of personal opinions precisely because these post-discursive opinions have weathered the storm of critical reflection and have been revised by new knowledge and new perspectives. Positive public moments (or public spirited moments) are positive, in that interactions are constructive and informative. They are public in that a range of public views are brought together for consideration, and they are fleeting, in that within formal meetings, as is the case in this empirical investigation, such moments can arise unexpectedly and play important roles in the transformation of opinions.

Representation

One of the more contentious areas in deliberative democratic theory centres on the problem of cultural pluralism and representation. From earlier formulations of the public sphere, where societies were relatively homogenous and literacy was found within privileged classes alone, the multiculturalism and pronounced social and economic stratification that characterize modern societies represent serious challenges to the deliberative democrat. These challenges relate to the ability of minority and

underprivileged groups to access the public sphere -- to find a seat around the table. Once at the table, many interests that are not already established within the public sphere fail to find voice because of communicative and rhetorical deficits -- their voices, arguments, and perspectives don't receive equal recognition and consideration. Acknowledging the critics who observe a tendency within the public sphere to re-enforce dominant social relationships, theorists have identified several potential remedies. The first can be characterized as the 'role-playing approach.' In an ideal world, anyone with a public concern will have free access to the public sphere, but from time to time, because of pragmatic limits on group size we must assume that civic-minded participants will take on the views and perspectives of other public interests. This notion of role-playing is more common within representative democratic structures where an elected politician speaks on behalf of the interests of their constituents. For advocates of this approach, a version of role-playing can also serve to extend public interests into small group settings. This form of interest representation by proxy can assist in bringing minority or underrepresented perspectives to the table and giving them voice (Goodnight 1992). When representing the issues of small children or the natural world, where pertinent voices are not available, such forms of role-playing, or a "representation of the other," can make an important contribution to the adequacy of represented interests within a deliberative setting.

A different take on role-playing can be characterized as the 'common good approach.' This approach takes a dim view of interest groups representation altogether, and suggests that interest group politics are in fact counter-productive to deliberative democratic ideals. In the race to bring together a wide range of public interests, the search for a common good, or a middle ground, is lost in a cacophony of exclusive claims and rights-based rhetoric. According to common good proponents, whenever citizens begin to retribalize into ethnic or other 'fixed identity' groups, democracy falters because any possibility of human dialogue is lost (Elshtain 1995). To the extent that role-playing public representatives attempt to put themselves into the perspective of other public interests, common good advocates argue that interest-based politics serve only to set interests against one another is a winner-take-all battle to the end. A more productive form of representation involves seeking representatives who possess a broad set of social

perspectives and a more generalized set of interests. These generalized interests refer to an ability to hold diverse perspectives in balance rather than sticking to pre-defined interest-based politics.

In general, common-good advocates are troubled by the extent to which advisory committees take on multi-stakeholder qualities, because the premise behind such representation is to bring to the table a narrow set of interests that are formulated around a politics of so-called special interest. The politics of jobs versus environment, tourism versus forestry, growth versus conservation, are all present within the forest management discourse. To constitute advisory committees along the lines of interest-based politics simply serves to engender a feeling of 'turf-protection' among participants, where environmentalists need to be true to their cause by representing other environmentalists, people employed in the forestry industry feel they need to reflect the opinions of their co-workers, and so on. Deliberative processes under these conditions often come to a grinding halt as specific interests dig in for a long battle.

Other authors take a more favourable view of interest-based politics. According to advocates of the 'interest-based approach,' instead of detracting from democratic ends, group-based interests are an essential resource for the development and functioning of public-spirited moments. It is inadequate to conceive of these interests being either represented by a distant 'other' or absorbed into a more abstract notion of the common good. Instead, the perspective of specific groups, their experience as unique social groups, and their knowledge of particular issues and context, is crucial to the deliberative process (Young 1997; Williams 1998). Williams, for instance, defends a group-based theory of fair representation (as opposed to liberal representation). Three central themes form the basis of this argument. First, voice – an individual's distinctive point of view cannot be duplicated effectively by a representative other. Second, trust – the relationship between representative and constituent forms a strong bond of accountability. Third, memory – according to Williams, the groups with the strongest claims for enhanced representation are those whose members are subject to long-standing patterns of structural inequality. Accordingly, a member of that marginalized community best represents these memories. Within the context of forest sector advisory committees, an ideal form of representation would include the voice of First Nations, community

boosters, social critics, environmental advocates, and a host of other group interests, who in turn fuel debate and critical reflection. Rather than committing to an abstract notion of generalized interests, Young (1997) claims that these interest-based advocates must only commit to cooperation and an exploration of just solutions.

In summary, common good advocates call for a strict exclusion of particular interests within deliberative settings as a corrosive agent to desirable deliberative outcomes. By seeking to tie the lines of debate to specific interest-based politics, deliberative settings are quickly dragged into situations where the interests of particular groups, especially those with louder and stronger voices, hijack critical reflection and debate. Instead, representatives who hold a wide range of interests in the balance better serve these settings. The role-playing advocate is sympathetic to this view but remains more pragmatic about how a diverse range of public interests can be represented within smaller deliberative settings. By acting as a representative other, minority interests can find a place at the table and can gain accent within the public discourse. The advocate for interest group expression is unimpressed by these notions of generalized interest and role-playing, and calls for a much strong, present, and personal voice from group-based interests. Adequate group representation draws on situated knowledge "as a resource for enlarging the understanding of everyone and moving them beyond their own parochial interests" (Young 1997:399).

Autonomy

Another important theme within deliberative democratic theory involves the question of autonomy. According to Benhabib (1992), the emergence of an autonomous public sphere is central to our understanding of the role of public deliberation within modern society. In its early European form (Habermas 1989), the public sphere was conceived as a locale for civic-minded discourse that maintained a high degree of autonomy from dominant forms of social control. As an emergent institution that promoted new sources of knowledge and understanding, the public sphere provided citizens with an opportunity to formulate personal opinions independent of church and state authorities. Translated into contemporary social conditions, the public sphere is perhaps more accurately understood as a ubiquitous network of interaction and contestation that is located between

state and corporate structures on one hand, and the private individual on the other. As such, democratic theorists have developed a strong affinity for the concept of civil society and the value of civic institutions to the vitality of the public sphere (Dean 1996; Honneth 1999). Within this middle zone of civil society, deliberators are free to interact in ways that are not unduly influenced by dominant forms of social control. Several definitions of authentic deliberation in fact are formulated against the strong potential for coercive influence. These influences emerge "via the exercise of power, manipulation, indoctrination, propaganda, deception, expressions of mere self-interest, threats (of the sort that characterize bargaining), and attempts to impose ideological conformity" (Dryzek 2000). A primary mode for protecting against these kinds of coercive tendencies is to construct institutional settings whereby such deliberations are as free as possible from manipulation and the steering potential of state and corporate interest. This concern for manipulation doesn't mean that state and corporate interests are unwelcome. Instead, an ideal setting would involve a contest of competing discourses where dominant modes of argument receive equal treatment with alternative sources and modes of argument. In such settings there is no pre-determined deference to authority or expertise but public opinion is determined solely by the interaction of a constellation of discourses within the a deliberative context.

According to some scholars, the identification of coercive tendencies within the public sphere is easier said than done. Such coercive tendencies within the public sphere provide an especially insidious problem for social researchers. When it comes to the exercise of power, Lukes (1974) reminds us of the three dimensional nature of power – the third dimensional view being a kind of gradual adherence to dominant ideological positions. In his empirical analysis of power, Lukes is concerned with moving beyond merely observable social facts; facts that might be available to the researcher who studies conflict between individuals or groups. The three dimensional view is concerned with understanding the unconscious and or unobservable elements of action and inaction. In other words, what may be objectively observable by traditional empirical research methods is not sufficient for analysis of the third dimension. The more important elements of empirical interest are tied to the interpretation of action or inaction under

asymmetrical power relations and the extent to which these actions are constrained or encouraged by institutions and social forces.

Other researchers also share this notion of power as a form of manipulation. For instance, Eliasoph (1996) discusses the idea of hegemony as a "kind of common sense that is in perpetual motion" (1996:267) so that people assume a set of social realities, problems, and proposed solutions convincingly represent a full spectrum of possibilities beyond which no viable alternative exist. In this way, a third dimension of power is not something that is simply observed in social settings as a kind of covert command over a particular setting, but rather, it takes on much more subtle qualities where opinions evolve through time in favour of dominant interests. These interests are shaped and formed within deliberative settings where individuals absorb information and ideas from common sources and begin to see the world in ways that reflect a common worldview. Problems and challenges as well as solutions and opportunities represent a common body of experience and a collective wisdom. Eventually the normative framework under which deliberation takes place makes it increasingly difficult for deliberators to think critically, to assume alternative perspectives and to have those perspectives considered in any serious way.

Empirical Approach

This study of deliberative processes in forest management involves a comparison of three company-sponsored advisory committees in Alberta. These committees were selected based on an initial telephone interview with 14 advisory committee representatives. After an initial screening, three committees were chosen to achieve maximum variation in several variables: age of group, number of company representatives, and number of sponsoring companies. These variables represent some key differences between groups and offer an opportunity to conduct comparisons across cases of maximum variation. Table 3.1 reports the year established and the basic structure of each group.

Table 3.1. Committee characteristics

	Year initiated	Number of community representatives	Number of company representatives	Number of sponsoring companies
Committee 1	Late 1980s	19	4-6	1
Committee 2	Mid 1990s	16	4	4
Committee 3	Late 1990s	15	2	1

The general methodological orientation was informed by critical ethnography. It was critical in terms of locating actors within structural settings with specific attention to relations of power and control (Morrow 1994). Critical theory provided an analytical lens where specific constraints or exclusions can be investigated and where alternative forms of social organization can be proposed (Young 2001). It was ethnographic in that several forms of empirical inquiry were employed to gain insight into "group culture." First, over a 10-month period, researchers observed, tape-recorded, and transcribed 25 committee meetings. In addition, document analysis, including meeting minutes, handouts, and other materials related to committee work were reviewed and analyzed for specific content. Finally, 29 individual interviews were conducted with advisory committee members the year following committee observations.

As an instrumental case study, where specific theoretical questions guided the development and the analysis of the empirical research (Stake 1995), data were organized and analyzed in the following fashion. Rather than identifying specific patterns within the data through an aggregation (coding) of individual narrative segments, a wider spectrum of events were identified that related to key research questions. In this way, analysis involved a search for recurring patterns of relationship between committee members and the sponsoring agency or patterns of behaviour by dominant and marginalized voices within the committee setting. After a systematic review of the meeting and interview transcripts, case background summaries were prepared for each committee – highlighting specific events or exchanges within the committee itself that resonated with specific theoretical interests. These case background summaries served to consolidate a large amount of primary data into a secondary document that was then used to draw out specific events and perspectives of relevance to the research questions.

Forest Sector Advisory Committees in Alberta

Within Alberta, the drive for greater involvement in environmental governance dates back to the early 1970s when the Alberta government established the Environmental Conservation Authority (ECA). Although provincially sponsored, the ECA made extensive use of public advisory committees. These committees where "semi-independent bodies comprised of volunteers who chose to study any issue they deemed important,

passing resolutions accordingly" (Stefanick and Wells 2000:370). The ECA also encouraged lay involvement in environmental governance, and became a catalyst for more participatory governance structures during the 1970s (Sadler 1977). By the 1980s, however, growing differences of opinion between the ECA and the Alberta Government regarding large-scale developments, coupled with an economic downturn, led to the decline of the ECA's influence as a public voice. Government interest in more participatory approaches to environmental governance was not rekindled again until the late 1980s. At the time, industrial expansion and concern for environmental impacts brought pressure on politicians to open up the decision making process to greater public scrutiny (Pratt and Urquhart 1994; Richardson et al. 1993). Unlike the government-driven process instituted through the ECA during the 1970s, one key policy change during this period resulted in the Alberta government divesting considerable responsibility for citizen involvement to the forest industry. According to an account by a forest industry spokesperson, the Alberta Government brought together forest company representatives in 1988 and demanded that "you figure out public involvement or we'll tell you what to do" (Udell 1999). In response, several early adopters initiated fledgling advisory committees in 1989. This policy initiative has since resulted in a cascade effect where all forest companies with land management responsibilities established local level public processes to address forest management and planning issues in their region. With no specific guidance from government, companies were free to choose any tool(s) or mechanism(s) deemed appropriate. The overwhelming mechanism of choice, however, was the local-level advisory committee. Based on a telephone survey with advisory committee spokespersons in 2001, there were 14 advisory committees province wide, ranging in size from 6 to 21 public members and 1 to 5 company officials.

This emerging mode of de-centered and company-sponsored citizen involvement is set against a backdrop of dramatic industrial expansion within the resource sectors of Alberta. Within the forest sector, annual area harvested grew from less than 5 million m^3 in 1970, to more than 22 million m^3 in 1997. Similarly, petroleum industry drilling went from less than 20,000 wells in 1970 to more than 100,000 wells in 1995 (Timoney and Lee 2001; Schneider 2002). Increased access was also dramatic during this period, as roads were punched in to wilderness areas to service these growing industrial interests.

Resulting from this industrial expansion in Northern Alberta, many resource-based communities have benefited from employment and other economic benefits to their local communities. Table 3.2 illustrates this strong socio-demographic profile with a suite of variables from the three Northern Alberta communities associated with this study. On average, although unemployment rates are higher than the provincial average, labour force participation rates are the same or higher than provincial average and family incomes are also substantially higher in some cases.

Table 3.2. Socio-demographics of host communities

	Population	Unemploy-ment rate	Labour force participation (%)	Average income ($)	Average dwelling value ($)
Town 1	9,405	8.0	76	70,991	116,808
Town 2	8,334	7.4	84	68,960	126,600
Town 3	7,585	5.4	75	60,672	112,334
Edmonton	937,845	5.5	72	60,817	146,529
Alberta	2.97 Mill.	5.2	73	60,142	159,698

* Based on 2001 Census of Canada.

With histories of close to 100 years, many resource-based towns in Northern Alberta have developed into mature settlements, with a wide variety of employment opportunities and social activities. Although few residents would deny the value and importance of local resource-based economic activity, residents also indulge in a wide range of recreational activities, and speak highly of the quality of local environmental resources and their enjoyment of them. [4]

Advisory committee autonomy

Situated within the context of resource development and prosperous host communities in Central Alberta, the sponsorship of public advisory committees by local forest companies has become a primary mechanism for incorporating local public values into the forest management and planning process. This section provides an overview of the structure and functioning of the three advisory committees included in this case study. However, personal observation and survey research with other committees suggest that the

[4] Recent forest values survey research indicates that residents of these resource-based communities hold statistically similar views to urban residents on wide range of forest issues (McFarlane and Boxall 2000). They enjoy the benefits of high wages and a high standard of living, they enjoy the surrounding landscape for recreational and aesthetic reasons, yet they share some concern about the impact of industrial activity on environmental resources.

descriptions here may be more broadly applicable to other advisory committees in Alberta.[5] As a uniform feature of these committees, they share a consistent mandate to provide ongoing input into forest management and planning operations. This input is limited to advice and recommendations and does not extend to decision-making responsibility. Rather, on a regular basis, members make recommendations to company officials and these officials are obliged to maintain careful note of all recommendations, and respond to each one specifically with a rationale for either acceptance or rejection. In some groups, recommendations are tracked closely over several years as companies attempt to deal with issues and respond to committee wishes. In other instances, the tracking process is much less formalized. All three groups function under a detailed set of operating guidelines, or terms of reference. These terms state the overarching purpose of the group, outlining the different types of membership (voting, non-voting, and ad-hoc). The process for new membership often includes a formal application to the committee by a group or individual seeking membership and a committee approval process. In addition, expectations of specific members are clearly defined. For instance, the terms of reference for one committee state that (1) members will try to represent their own views, the views of the public, as well as those of the organization they represent [and] distinguishing between each, (2) members will go back to their organizations to acquaint them with the background and issues being discussed and to gather their opinions from this informed perspective, (3) members will keep their organizations up to date on the progress and documentation of the issues being discussed, along with the responses from [company representatives].

Differences from one committee to the next are as striking as the similarities. In terms of committee memberships, several approaches have been employed. In some cases, committee membership is restricted to constituent representation, where a single member of an organization serves to represent the interests of that organization. In other cases, individual community members represent personal views as well as community

[5] Survey research in 1999 reveals that, on average, committee members hold a set of values associated with the forest that closely mirror the values of registered professional foresters. In other words, committee members and foresters are more anthropocentric than the general public (McFarlane and Boxall 2000). This survey research also reveals that advisory committee members are more male, educated, and wealthy than the general public. They also trust forest industry sources of information but receive a wide variety of information from other sources, including academics, government, and environmental organizations (Parkins et al. 2001).

interests. In addition to constituent or individual representation, some committees have opted for representation from official elected representatives from the town or county. This third form of representation is designed to include committee members who hold a broad range of community interests in balance. A detailed breakdown of representatives from three committees is provided in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3. Composition of committee membership

Members	Committee 1 (FRAG)	Committee 2 (RFAC)	Committee 3 (WeyFAC)
Town	1	4	1
County	1	3	1
Recreation	2	2	1
Trappers	1	1	1
Education	2	1	1
Environment	2	1	1
Oil & Gas	0	1	1
Agriculture	0	0	1
Aboriginal	1	2	0
Chamber of Commerce	1	0	0
Union	3	0	1
Timber contractors	0	1	3
Seniors	1	0	1
Youth	1	0	1
Member-at-large	0	1	2
Medical	1	0	0
Religion	1	0	0
Parks	1	0	0
Federal Government	1	0	0
Total voting	20	17	16
Standing members	7	5	5
Total committee	27	22	21

With regard to the theoretical issues identified earlier, there are several key differences between the three committees involved in this study. First, the committees differ in terms of the nature of membership. Some committees have enlisted members with direct connections to specific organizations that have an interest in forest management and planning. This kind of interest-group representation fits most closely with the group-interest approach to representation. Alternately, other committees have chosen forms of elected representation or membership-at-large, where such individuals are invited to represent the common good or to represent the views of others. These differences between committees provide an opportunity to observe the way that distinct forms of representation either inhibit or promote positive public moments. Second,

differences in the relationship between company and committee provide a basis for understanding the role of committee autonomy in the emergence of public moments.

An inside view

In order to explore issues of representation and autonomy in the context of these three committees, we will examine four events that took place during the 10-month period of observation. The texts in italics are verbatim statements from committee members that offer a thick description of the events (Patton, 1990). For brevity, a summary of the event was developed, while attempting to maintain as much verbatim text as possible. Although these are single events, they represent a pattern or a common mode of operation, a way of addressing problems, or a way of relating to each other, that was observed repeatedly during the 10-month period. The first two events deal with a presentation from an oil and gas representative from the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers (CAPP), who spoke to two committees on two different occasions about the activities of oil and gas companies in their region. The second two events deal with a policy paper on forest harvest operations presented at two advisory committees by the Alberta Trapper's Association.

Vignette one: oil and gas (committee three)

As an expert on oil and gas activities in the region, the presenter launched into his discussion with several major claims about recent positive events in the sector. *Once upon a time, the oil and gas company was a lot more intrusive on the land base than it is now -- you had cat-blade width seismic lines all over the place. These days the impact is meant to be minimal. The presence on the land base is deemed to be short term and stakeholder consultation is required in every phase of what we do.* After spending some time setting the stage, committee members began asking questions. This back and forth between presenter and committee member consumed a major portion of the 1.5-hour presentation. One of the first questions came from a rancher who was interested in how frequently land title changes hands between companies. The presenter responded by noting that some areas of the province become "hot" property due to an ongoing accumulation of data in the area. As a follow-up question, the rancher expressed concern

about the planning implications of frequent land sales. *Does this not create a planning problem?* Again the presenter provided some context regarding the improvements in long-term planning for road construction between oil and gas and the forest sector, suggesting that there is *due process that is meant to avoid roads going willy-nilly all over the place.*

This back and forth between presenter and a wide range of committee members continued throughout the presentation. At one point a committee member, brought the discussion around to the issue of trust. *What do you suppose contributes to the widespread mistrust of landsmen [oil and gas field workers]?* After a brief reply from the presenter, the member suggested that mistrust relates to the issue of less-than-transparent honesty regarding the range of options available to residents in the area. He concluded by stating *it seems like the company's motives perhaps have always been strictly profit and not long term.* The presenter took these comments in stride, suggesting that with more than 1200 registered oil and gas companies in Alberta, *we are our own worst enemies* with many maverick smaller players. Later in the talk, discussion again turned to the issue of long-term planning and the speculative nature of oil and gas development. The issue came to a head when several members resisted the idea that oil and gas development is having less impact now than in the past. One member countered the presenter's claims by pointing out that *you are drilling somewhere between 1000 and 1500 wells just on the Northern East slopes in this current year.* He followed up by stating that *[oil and gas impact] is a huge issue with [this committee]. This is something that we've talked and talked about...there is still an incredible distance to go in terms of anything that gets to a point of being cooperative between forestry and oil and gas. Isn't that a reasonable statement?* In response, the presenter revised his earlier statements by saying, *you are right, it's a long way from being right but there are efforts being made to make that better.*

Vignette two: oil and gas (committee one)

On the second occasion of this presentation to an advisory committee, although the presentation content was almost identical, the frequency and nature of interaction between presenter and committee members was remarkably different. Prior to the

presentation, a company official set the stage by making several complementary remarks about the presenter. *I've known [Jo] for a few years...He's always looking for ways to bring these resource industries around a common vision and coordinated activity so that we can reduce our collective footprint and work together.* As in the first committee, the presenter was interrupted from time to time with questions from committee members. Coming largely from a single committee member, issues of: industry regulation (*who makes up the members of the regulatory board?)*, ownership *(what percentage are Canadian owned?)*, animal health (*what kind of provisions are there for wildlife in the area?)*, flaring (*you were going to phase out flaring, but I still see it everywhere)*, and arsenic poisoning (*there is arsenic in those wells and people are outraged*) circumscribed a significant amount of discussion time. However, other committee members took up few of these lines of questioning. Rather, at times these questions appeared to be mostly an annoyance to the presenter and to other committee members. In some instances, a provincial government employee addressed the question by referencing government standards.

Again, the presenter outlined the advantages of low-impact seismic development. *It's a lot different than it was in the past...when you fly over now, you can hardly tell that the line is there.* Not exactly objecting to these comments but pointing out his frustration with the number of seismic companies in the area, one member related some poor relations with the local seismic operators and his recreation club. However, no committee members challenged the idea that oil and gas operators were reducing their industrial footprint in the region. In fact, to bookend the positive comments at the beginning of this presentation, a provincial government employee offered some final words of endorsement. *We made great strides here [with] long term access plans and that's a step that we sent to CAPP. When an application [for road development] comes in, all the up-front planning has been done, and it saves a lot of grief for all parties involved. Before, we didn't have any of that long-term access planning.*

Vignette three: trappers (committee three)

The Alberta Trapper's Association policy paper on forest harvest operations (ATA 2001) identifies several guiding principles (e.g., forests provide citizens with various resources,

support the concept of harvesting trees, clear cutting and herbicide will negatively impact trappers). It also contains a series of positions on clear cuts, the value of corridors for animal access, the protection of watercourses, and the value of face-to-face consultation. The ATA representative on the committee brought this 'position paper' to the attention of members as a point of information. Having met a week earlier with forest company and oil and gas company officials in the region, she initiated the presentation by outlining the outcome of her meeting. *I think it turned out to be a very good meeting. Whether it will bring us together in negotiations, it's hard to say because some [trappers] want the moon.* She went on to describe her concerns about the short lead time for submitting notification to trappers when a company may be affecting their trap line. In some cases, *they are getting this stuff in English and they are not understanding it*, and in other cases, *for people that live on their trap line, they don't come to town and they don't check their mail.* From this set of concerns, an oil and gas representative on the committee offered some information about landsmen in a local oil and gas company. *They've taken three landsmen and they've put them strictly for trappers.* This comment gave the trapping representative some sense of assurance that companies were taking their concerns seriously.

Moving beyond this initial discussion, members were interested in understanding the penalty system for companies who do not undertake proper notification procedures. Members bantered around this topic for several minutes, highlighting some personal examples. *I happened to go out to the ski trails and when I arrived there, three guys with chain saws marched out of the bush...they were doing seismic [line development].* Limited consequences for improper notification prompted members to express some concern about how well the 1500 licensed companies in Alberta are monitored. After dealing with these concerns, the discussion turned to concerns expressed in the paper about the use of herbicides. In directing the conversation, one member commented that, *it sounds like the trapper's recommendations were pretty down on herbicide period.* The representative trapper agreed but qualified her concern by stating that in every situation herbicide may not be a bad thing. *We have to give and take and if herbicide is a thing that you have to use in a few spots, who are we to say that you can't us them.* Before this conversation ended, a non-voting member from a provincial government department

supported the trapper's concerns by stating that *they believe in the principle that natural succession is the best thing to maintain biodiversity...[while] there is business to be done, natural succession is the better way to go.*

Vignette four: trappers (committee two)

Similar to vignette three, the ATA representative initially presented the policy paper on forest harvest operations. After being invited to comment on the paper, the trapper made a few general comments. W*e feel [forestry] should be more or less smaller scale, every year... We've done this to state more or less the way we feel, [so] we're talking the same language.* Feeling somewhat unsatisfied with this comment, company representatives pushed the member for specific information. *So what evidence do you have to support this* claim about the ill effects of herbicide use? *It seems like a pretty strong statement when you don't have any evidence to support it.* After some long and awkward pauses, it became evident that the local trapper was unwilling or unable to engage company representatives in a debate over the merits of herbicide use. The committee agreed to invite a member from the provincial trapper's association to present (and defend) the paper at the next meeting. But before ending the discussion, several company officials critiqued the paper. *In stating that Vision (brand name) has not been adequately tested for wide use in forests, I really take exception because Vision has had more scientific research than any other herbicide...I could bring a mountain of information with no evidence of any negative impact at all.* Still another company official stated that the ATA should have engaged in some dialogue with the forest industry and looked at the existing research before developing this position paper.

A month later, a provincial spokesperson for the ATA attended the meeting and outlined their position on harvest operations. *We expect from time to time to take positions on a number of concerns that trappers face in the province as a whole...It's time we make a position on some of the things that we've experienced, some of the things we've heard. I don't think it should surprise the forest industry that trappers, as a whole, do not really agree with even the clear cutting concept.* He went on to state his concerns more specifically about the use of Vision herbicide; there were *some fears out there amongst the membership that there are many factors that are not fully known. And we*

continue to hear articles, some are for and some are against, as ordinary laymen, we don't know where to stand...So we'd like to error on the side of caution.

In response to this defense of the policy paper, company official took issue with several points. First, there was a sense in which the ATA failed to adequately engage the forest industry in a dialogue about these issues prior to the release of the position paper. *I think you would have found a more favourable response from the forest industry.* Second, company officials took issue with the apparent lack of scientific evidence. *Have there been any papers written that discuss the impact of herbicides on trap lines? Are we bringing science to the table or are we bringing folklore?* To this question, the ATA representative took exception. *We're bringing laymen experience. It's not folklore.* In his defense, and as one of the first public members of the committee to wade into the discussion, a member stated that *the trapper that's out there, and working on the trap line is a professional. And his knowledge, although not well documented, and not necessarily put together scientifically, in his head, collectively is a valuable resource that is difficult to tap into. And their information is very strong in their minds and they can tell pretty well what the impact is to them...So I think we need to try and appreciate what [the ATA representative] is trying to say here. He's put together a paper based on the experience of a lot of trappers from across the province, and it's not to be taken lightly.* Although these supportive comments appeared to have some sobering impact on the company representatives, several individuals continued to take issue with various aspects of alleged negative impacts from herbicide. As a final comment, one company representative concluded that *I found it, as an education thing, if you are trying to tell the public what is happening, I found it was misleading, and if you wanted to use it as an education thing for your trappers, it was not really telling them the truth either, so I found it misleading on both parts.*

Summary of public moments

A close examination of events exposes two vignettes (one and three) that exhibit the hallmarks of a positive public moment. These are moments when multiple voices enjoyed a say in the discussion, when an exploration of alternative perspectives was entertained, and when the interaction between individuals resulted in observable revisions to personal

opinions. In vignette one, we see the emergence of this public spiritedness in the context of a discussion about the impact of oil and gas activity. Several things are striking about this vignette. First, this presentation was made to a committee of knowledgeable lay individuals who had spent considerable time thinking about and discussing the problem of industrial impacts on the forest landscape. After challenging the major premise of the presentation, members communicated their collective wisdom back to the presenter in stating that *this is something we have talked and talked about...there is still an incredible distance to go.*

Second, local company representatives and other non-voting members played almost no role in the discussion. Company representatives did not attempt to correct or disagree with the direction or the conclusion to committee deliberations. Equally, in vignette three, the trapper's policy paper on forest harvest elicited very little defensive reaction from company officials. Instead, the discussion moved freely from concerns about due process and notification to issues of mistrust in local oil and gas workers and then finally to a brief discussion on herbicide use. Although questions of clarification were raised, ATA perspectives on herbicide were accepted as legitimate sources of knowledge on the issue.

In contrast, two vignettes (two and four) involved discussion and debate (interaction from multiple perspectives) that was less positive or non-existent. Two features are noteworthy about vignette two. First, the presentation was book-ended by comments from company and government officials regarding the good progress being made in limiting impacts from industrial development on the forest landscape. Second, although the impacts from oil and gas activity are somewhat equivalent between the regions of committees one and three, no committee members took up the issue of impacts. The discussion floated around issues peripheral to the main subject of the talk. In vignette four, the presentation involved ample discussion, but forest company representatives dominated discussions and were highly dismissive of lay knowledge. These events provide a useful opportunity to explore the attributes of small groups that either inhibit or promote the emergence of positive public moments.

Interest group contributions

In deconstructing the inhibitors and contributors to these public-spirited moments, what can be said about representation? Does a particular type of committee membership contribute more substantially to the emergence of these moments? Understanding the important link between broad-based inclusion of public interests and the legitimacy of a public process, sponsors are naturally concerned about retaining a wide range of public interests on the advisory committee. In order to achieve some broad representation, committees often take one of two approaches – they either attempt to build a representative cross-section of public interests through specific interest-group representatives or they piggy-back on the local political process and select elected representatives, who by definition, are tasked with transcending specific interest group politics and claim to hold in balance a broad set of public values. In the context of this study, there is some evidence that several features of public membership are more positively associated with public-spirited moments.

First, the most consistent contributors to the emergence of public moments were 'interest-based' members. They fuelled the debate with a depth of knowledge and understanding of the issues coupled with a strong sense of conviction. Consistent with the interest group approach to representation, these findings support the claim that specific group-based interests on the land base (such as recreation, angling, and trapping) represent important human resources within deliberative settings. In those instances where public spirited moments took place, it was interest-based advocates, especially those with good communication skills and a strong background in forest management issues, that provided regular fodder for discussion and debate. Within the four vignettes, group-based members made all statements that fostered public spiritedness (i.e. *what contributes to the widespread mistrust?; what kind of provisions are there for wildlife?; the trapper that is out there is a professional).* In contrast, common good advocates played little to no role in these discussions.

This finding is consistent with a more general evaluation of committee functioning. Committee two, which experienced the most difficulty in fostering an interest in local issues and struggled to maintain attendance from meeting to meeting, was also the committee with a preponderance of common good representatives – members

responsible for representing local towns and municipalities. As elected town and county officials, these members were favoured by company officials because of their balanced approach to the issues. *We've got representatives from the town and from the counties. And they have a fairly wide range of; fairly large perspective on the issues that are going on...they're the ones that can kind of bring all of the issues to the table from the town and they should be fairly knowledgeable about what the public thinks about certain things.* Although in theory such representative may at times take on more activist positions in favour of town issues, in the experience of these advisory committees, common good representatives offered limited political resources to the production of positive public moments. In many cases, these individuals possessed the deliberative skills, but not the passion, nor the specific forest science background to make a significant contribution.

Second, the most positive contributors possessed the time, energy, and extensive knowledge of local forest issues. In situations where citizens are invited to participate, it is often the same public citizens who serve on many of these public committees. The active members of these committees were no different. For many members, reading the meeting minutes represents the extent of their committee work between meetings. Extra materials distributed to the group were often not read and certainly very few people found the time to investigate issues and bring alternative sources of information to the committee. For those who did have the time and the energy to contribute, and especially those with a background in forest science, they provided the most valuable contribution to the emergence of public-spirited moments. These members asked the challenging questions, provided an alternative point of view, and pressed the sponsoring company for improvements or better efforts on specific issues.

Third, the most positive contributors knew when to apply pressure and when to hold back. In recent years, one Alberta forest company dissolved their advisory committee because local advocates held relentless campaigns against status quo forest management. In this situation where advocates maintained zero-sum positions on issues, deliberations quickly de-generated into negative politics. According to Young (1997), advocates who participate in deliberative settings should be willing to cooperate with others in an exploration of just solutions. This, of course, requires some willingness to revise specific advocacy positions during the deliberative processes. More positive

contributors to public spirited moments had an intuitive sense about where to draw the line, to bring an issue to a point, but then to also understand the constraints associated with a small-group process. They understood that these committees are structurally and procedurally ill placed to shoulder the weight of an aggressive campaign on forest policy reform.

Reflecting again on the three forms of representation found in the literature, the structure of small-group deliberation will require some occasional forms of role-playing. It is unlikely and practically impossible for a full range of public interests to participate directly in such deliberations. Although some of this role-playing is inevitable, as Williams (1998) points out, it suffers from problems of legitimacy. Committee members who most closely match the voice and history of their constituencies and who maintain a high level of trust with their constituency have a moral advantage over those who simply claim to represent the 'other' without a strong epistemic and moral link. In this case study, interest-based advocates provided considerable deliberative resources, through the communication of knowledge and an enthusiastic engagement that contributed to the emergence of public moments. In contrast to the concerns of common-good advocates, the 'fixed identity' of these representatives served to politicize deliberative activities in constructive ways.

What seems more challenging and perhaps troubling for these interest-group advocates who remain involved in committees over many years is the paradox of personal transformation. Through frequent contact with other points of view, personal points of view are transformed. If nothing else they become more understanding of other perspectives. Other members of the interest group are not privileged to share in these committee deliberations and will not share this transformation of personal opinions. The result may be a gradual de-linking of voice and trust when constituents realize that their representative has 'changed her tune.' In this situation, the challenge becomes one of extending the deliberative environment beyond the bounds of the advisory committee. In order to maintain this like to a particular constituency, it may be necessary to extend the deliberative space, to engage a larger group of deliberators. Deliberative procedures such as public forums that bring a wider range of constituents into the contact with other perspectives may be appropriate within this context.

One can also imagine a situation where interest group advocates are slowly transformed by their experience -- the month-to-month sharing of knowledge and values. These small-group dynamics call for a constant engagement with the constellation of discourses in forest management – a constant checking and rechecking of consistency between discourses within the committee and discourses in the public sphere of forest management. By maintaining this link to these discourses and by bringing them into the small-group setting, the tendency to capitulate over time to a smaller range of discourses may be avoided.

Group autonomy

Within the context of private sector advisory committees, theoretical expectations associated with autonomy or independence can seem highly idealized and often impossible to achieve. In fact one might argue that no deliberative setting is sufficiently free from subtle steering tactics and forms of manipulation. Participatory processes in the forest sector provide a case in point. As deliberative processes become more de-centered and privatized, they also become more closely attached to private sector interests. Is this an 'Achilles heel' for group legitimacy or can the attributes of un-coerced public deliberations emerge under these conditions? If we take the definition of the public sphere as a ubiquitous constellation of competing discourses that exists between the formal structures of power and authority, and the private worlds of citizens, then we may conceive of these discourses emanating from nodes of public conversation that retain some relationship to state or corporate structures. These corporate and state-driven processes exist alongside environmental or science based public groups that maintain considerable deference to western scientific traditions. They are certainly linked to western modes of scientific inquiry. Add to this mix a complex web of traditional knowledge and global perspectives on the environment, and we begin to observe the 'wild complex' observed by Habermas (1996).

More often than not in Canada, a constellation of discourses emanates from deliberative bodies that maintain a civil society orientation through lay involvement. But these same groups also maintain a specific steering and legitimating orientation through state or corporate sponsorship. In other words, while maintaining certain civic qualities,

they remain anchored to (and thus subject to influence from) specific social structures. Arguably no deliberative environments exist outside of these sources of influence. If this is in fact a reality of contemporary society, then how are we to understand the role of the sponsoring agency? Has deliberative democratic theory set the bar too high for these modern manifestations of the public sphere? The results of this case study reveal the potential for the emergence of public-spirited moments even within the context of private sponsorship. It shows that some forest companies resist the urge to steer deliberative outcomes, to direct and control personal opinion formation.

Of the three committees under observation, only one committee enjoyed a relatively high degree of group autonomy that resulted in more frequent moments of public-spirited discussion and debate. Two of these events are depicted in vignettes one and three. For the other committees, company representatives and other non-voting members inhibited such moments in several ways. Sponsors do this by 'setting the stage' (vignette two), by developing an expectation that what is about to be said is supported by the company and represents a collective wisdom, a dominant opinion on the matter, or what Eliasoph refers to as a 'consensus in motion' (Eliasoph 1996). Another way that sponsors do this is by ensuring that questions or comments arising from group deliberation are quickly answered or corrected by company 'experts' who attend meetings on a regular basis. In this way, deliberative outcomes never stray too far from company perspectives on a specific issue. Despite these easy opportunities for 'deliberative steering,' some companies have effectively resisted this activity. Committee three, in this study, exhibits an environment with considerable group autonomy. Company officials took a back seat to voting members. They were not quick to provide an answer, and they were content to allow discussions and debates to evolve under a natural flow of questions and answers between committee members.

Dryzek's concerns about coercion are present in all forms of public deliberation regardless of their origins or location within the public or private sector. All deliberative settings are subject to relations of power and control, to dominant discourses that may at times engineer a consensus in motion. For the champions of civil society, the public sphere represents a ubiquitous locale for private citizens to debate matters of public interest in settings that are free from coercion. A robust civil society, through its dense

networks of association and communication, offer an appealing array of qualities. These informal networks can move information efficiently and can promote positive interactions and an exchange of knowledge. Most importantly, these networks within civil society offer maximum freedom from the coercive tendencies within state and corporate structures. The formulation of civil society in this way is of course an ideal, but the lessons are clear. The re-production of a public sphere in contemporary society requires a degree of autonomy not easily achieved within the realm of private sector advisory committees. Nonetheless, these degrees of autonomy prove to be crucial in maintaining the benefits of public deliberation and in moving beyond the steering tactics of state and corporate sponsorship.

Summary

Private sector advisory committees in Alberta embody a nascent form of public participation in natural resource management. Characterized by a de-centered and privatized form of public participation, advisory committees of this nature claim legitimacy from local representation of public interests and an atmosphere that includes the opportunity to discuss contemporary issues and make recommendations that will be incorporated into forest planning and management. This study demonstrates, however, that these claims to legitimacy are weakened by certain modes of representation and by forms of power and control within deliberative settings. Although some committees approached the challenge of broad-based representation by involving a series of common-good members, this study reveals considerable deliberative weakness associated with this form of public representation. Rather, interest-group members with considerable personal time and knowledge of forest issues provided the most constructive resources in the development of discussion and debate. Although maligned by some for their unwillingness to cooperate and their winner-take-all attitude, many interest-group members provided enthusiastic, knowledgeable, and constructive contributions to group deliberation. Additionally, the steering tactics of several sponsoring companies proved highly corrosive to public-spirited deliberations, resulting in a kind of consensus in motion.

In seeking broad-based public input into forest management, the resources of interest-group representatives are clearly advantageous to the quality of group deliberations. For many small communities, it may be difficult to identify an adequate range of local representatives. Interest-group advocates may be willing, however, to participate on an ad hoc basis and may be available as a regular resource to provide formal presentations and a steady supply of information, scientific research, and group-specific perspectives. Along the same lines, in reconfiguring the relationship between committees and their sponsors, one method of reducing steering tendencies would involve limiting the number of company representatives at committee meetings. Another strategy may include balancing the frequency of company-specific presentations with other perspectives on a particular issue. By cultivating a safe environment for multiple perspectives, de-centered and privatized deliberative environments may find ways of regaining legitimacy and contributing in more important ways to the development of an enlightened public opinion on the status of forests and forest resources in Canada.

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Chapter Four

TRUST AND DISTRUST IN DELIBERATIVE SPACE: AN EMPIRICAL EXPLORATION

Introduction

Over the past three decades, trust has assumed a central role in the social science literature. According to some theorists, trust plays an important role within modern society through an extension of confidence in individuals and institutions that control the levers of our complex social and environment systems. By trusting in this expertise, the benefits of a more diverse and differentiated society can be realized (Luhmann 1979; Giddens 1990). Within traditional societies, trust was based on interpersonal ties and family bonds. The success of modern societies hinges on a radical extension of this interpersonal trust to a faceless trust in social and economic institutions. The extent to which these relationships between the layperson and expert are taken for granted, trust serves to reduce complexity and provides a sense of security that is an important stabilizer in modern society. Other scholars have also pointed to the important role that trust plays in promoting the economic welfare of a nation. Trust is thought to be an integral component of the dense social networks that promote and stimulate conditions for prosperity (Fukuyama 1995; Putnam 2000). Where these conditions for trust exist, society can reduce transaction costs by dispensing with formal legal and contractual arrangements and by fostering positive conditions for social and economic progress. An extension of this popular social science theme can also be observed in the applied literature on public participation and natural resource management. For many analysts of small-scale deliberative settings, trust plays a crucial role in creating the conditions for constructive dialogue and decision-making (McCool and Guthrie 2001; Lachapelle et al. 2003).

In contrast to these positive notions of trust, a small literature is beginning to emerge that paints a very different picture about the role of trust in modern society. This contrasting view essentially frames a role for trust and distrust in the context of the risk society by signaling our dependence on many risk management institutions and the fact that a more reflective citizen within a 'risk society' will negotiate social relations along a

continuum of trust and distrust. Under these risk conditions, distrust may play an important role. For some, there may be no option other than to trust our risk managers (Wynne 1996). If citizens had the freedom to choose other less risky options, they might express a greater sense of distrust in existing institutions and regulatory systems. For others, distrust is observed to be a more important factor in the proper functioning of democratic decision making. Whereas trust can serve to facilitate the smooth functioning of democratic processes, it can also diminish the critical nature of discussion and debate and serve to de-politicize political spaces. In more positive terms, distrust can offer a "healthy skepticism, critical thinking, and the ability to question whether the rules of the game are operating as they should" (Trettin and Musham 2000:423). Fearing that societies are beginning to lose a critical edge that fuels the political system, challenges traditional power structures and provides invaluable sources of knowledge and insight, some scholars are attempting to re-invigorate the idea of dissent in modern society (Sunstein 2003; Warren 1999). More specifically, these writers are attempting to focus attention on institutional, rather than interpersonal, forms of trust as a critical feature of democratic societies. This emphasis on a specific locus of trust acknowledges that institutions play an important role in the social coordination of complex modern societies, but that face-to-face forms of trust (to the extent that such interactions tend to limit critical thinking and de-politicize the democratic process) may represent a debilitating factor in many public settings.

Within democratic theory, authors have explored a wide range of factors associated with the decline of democratic quality. Social facts such as cultural pluralism pose intense challenges for participatory forms of democracy, especially for minority groups and others with limited capacity to engage in an active debate (Young 2000; Williams 1998). Equally, scientific complexity offers its own challenges that involve the interaction between laypeople and scientific experts and problems with decision-making under conditions of uncertainty (Fischer 2000; Bohman 1996). Authors have developed an extensive analysis on these topics over the last decade. However, the role of trust in deliberative democratic theory is less well developed. Several authors have mapped out some of the theoretical terrain here but little empirical work has been published on the role of trust in real life deliberative settings.

Contributing to this analysis, this chapter provides an empirical study of trust in several small-group setting. Based on ten months of fieldwork, differences in the quality of deliberation, from one group setting to the next, provided an opportunity to explore the sources of this difference. Using observational and interview data from forest sector public advisory committees in Alberta, Canada, the role of trust is explored as a possible liberating and/or inhibiting factor in the quality of group deliberations. This empirical case also offers an opportunity to re-evaluate the role of trust in deliberative activities. Finding that a certain level of distrust was instrumental in forging a critical dialogue within these group settings, the idea of 'critical trust' is introduced, from the risk literature, as a key concept in our understanding of trust and democracy.

Theories of trust and democracy

Trust is a word that brings with it a great deal of familiarity. Along with words like hope, love, or integrity, these words infer some common understandings and meanings. But when questions are asked about the conditions under which love, trust or hope can be cultivated or sustained, then this common sense understanding begins to fall apart. Similarly, if someone starts to ask questions about the distinctions between trust and other related attributes of social interaction (such as cohesion or cooperation) then we begin to realize a need for more precise definitions. Political philosophers generally agree on a three-component definition of trust. The formula is as follows: A trusts B with C (or A trust B to do C) (Warren 1999). This relationship becomes obvious in the context of natural resource management, where (A) the general public may or may not trust (B) the resource managers with the exploitation of (C) fish stocks, trees, water, etc. The definition infers an asymmetrical relationship between A and B where the notion of vulnerability can play an important role. According to Baier, trust is in fact defined by vulnerability, in that "trust…is accepted vulnerability to another's possible but not expected ill will (or lack of good-will) toward one" (1994:99). If I am certain that B will always act in the interests of B, then there is no vulnerability and we cannot call this trust. In this sense, trust is dissimilar to other types of social interaction that retain more symmetrical power relations.

Another important aspect of this relationship between the truster and the trusted is the way in which these actors are differentially situated with respect to the value of thing C. In the natural resource context, a distant city dweller (A) may value forests and wildlife in ways that are distinct from the way corporate forest manager (B) may value that same resource. Within this context, the asymmetrical relations between A and B and the differential value of thing C become glaringly real. Defined in this way, trust becomes distinct from notions of cooperation (working together for the common good) or cohesion (shared moral values).

Leaving aside some of the analytical definitions of trust, there is also some consensus about the sources of trust. Zucker (1986) points to three ways that trust can be produced: (1) Through forms of association, trust can be produced by personal experience, a shared history that forms a strong sense of connection between individuals. (2) Trust can also be produced through more static means whereby the characteristics of an individual provide the necessary conditions for trust (i.e. ethnicity or socio-demographic background). (3) Finally, institutional levels of trust can be produced through appropriate institutional structures and attributes. These three sources of trust appear to represent an important starting point for discussions about trust in contemporary society along with an important point of analytical division. According to Warren (1999), the distinction between the associational and characteristic-based sources of trust on one hand and the institution-based sources of trust on the other represents an important dividing line. As a critique of neo-liberal definitions of trust that are found in Fukuyama and Putnam, he equates the first two sources of trust with a 'familiarity' definition of trust that has strong historical dimensions. Familiarity is "a way of interacting with others that depends upon projecting knowledge of the past onto future interactions" (1999:322). In this way, trust comes from a certain confidence that the processes of interaction between individuals and with the environment will continue into the future and the only way to foster more trust under these conditions is to enhance the communal and associational relations between A and B. This strong affinity for the ways in which dense networks of social interaction produce a foundation for trust tends to resonate strongly with the social capital literature.

Bellah et al. (1985) and Elshtain (1993) articulate this perspective on the role of trust as a kind of glue that holds people together in a shared system of values. In observing a general decline in trust, these authors are concerned about a parallel decline of Gemeinschaft-type community in contemporary society and the increasingly rights-based political discourses that position one interest group against another. Distrust in this context reflects a suspicion that citizens have become fragmented in their values systems, and are no longer capable of rising above 'group' interests and achieving some meaningful understanding of the common good (Mara 2001).

In contrast to the familiarity definition of trust, the third source of trust, defined by Zucker (1986) in its institutional form, is inherently future oriented. In this discussion we observe a clear link to contemporary theories of society (i.e. Giddens, Luhmann and Beck). These theorists articulate a compelling argument about the nature and the consequences of social transformation at the personal level as well as the consequences for more radical forms of risk and vulnerability in contemporary society. In Luhmann's words "the very complexity of the social order creates a greater need for coordination and hence a need to determine the future – i.e. a need for trust, a need which is now decreasingly met by familiarity" (1979:20). If trust is indeed future oriented, as Warren and others suggest, then it requires a decidedly institutional character where relations between the truster and the trusted can be as socially dynamic as the changing and complex nature of future social and biophysical conditions. These institutional relationships also become strongly linked to ideas of deliberative democracy, particularly when Warren discusses the desirable forms of trust within a political context. In a political context where A takes some interest in testing and re-testing the good will and the alignment of interest with B, Warren calls for a kind of 'recourse to monitoring,' or an ability to undertake some form of transparent evaluation. This evaluation provides an opportunity to continually realign the interests of truster and trusted and to do this through the deliberative democratic means of contest and challenge (1999:328).

Authors such as Luhmann (1979) and Hardin (1999) observe trust in this instance to be an instrumental good that relates to one's ability to achieve individual or group goals. Hardin, for instance, defines trust as "encapsulated interest" (1993) where trust is imparted when an individual has some reason to believe that the person or institution to

be trusted is expected to act in ways that extends mutual interest. In other words, trust is imparted when 'my interests are encapsulated by your interests.' In these definitions of trust, we can appreciate the important connection between trust as a kind of social glue that holds together the horizontal relationship between people (Zucker's first and second sources of trust) and the vertical relationships between individual political actors and the institutions in which they exercise political action (Zucker's third source of trust).

Somewhat consistent with this theoretical orientation, the applied literature on small-group deliberation identifies a clear connection between group success and the existence of interpersonal and institutional levels of trust (Lachapelle et al. 2003; Beierle and Konisky 2000; Wondolleck and Yaffee 1994). Other writers also find relationship building between managers and publics, and among publics themselves, to be an important process-oriented measure of successful public participation (Shindler and Neburka 1997; McCool and Guthrie 2001). The relationship between procedural justice and trust is also closely linked insofar as fairness contributes to the trust people place in authorities and in decisions (Smith and McDonough 2001). The role of trust in this literature focuses attention on the quality of interpersonal and institutional relationships and how these positive social relationships create possibilities for constructive dialogue and decision-making. In most instances, the working definitions of trust are grounded in the everyday realities of political activity. 'I trust you. Therefore, I am willing to work with you, to understand your perspective, and to live with decisions that are jointly derived.'

Theories of distrust

In contrast to this positive relationship between trust and political activity that defines this theoretical and applied literature, a growing body of literature is beginning to explore a functional role for distrust in political settings. Perhaps in reaction to an overly enthusiastic literature on trust and democratic practice, these authors identify an important role for distrust in our exploration of democratic processes. As a starting point, Barber (1983) reminds us that the origins of the political are forged in the fires of distrust. Democratic innovations took place because, in many ways, the embodiments of trust in traditional societies were often misplaced and tended to suppress and sustain exploitative

relations. These relations began to break down only when democratic mechanisms such as voting, freedom of speech, and separations of power were introduced. For the first time, citizens could take aim at the liberties and privileges of the trusted. According to Warren (1999:310), "distrust is essential not only to democratic progress but also, we might think, to the healthy suspicion of power upon which the vitality of democracy depends." In these words, Warren opens up the possibility that distrust may play an important functional role within the democratic process. In situations that are marked by challenge and conflict, where views are contested, where the status quo is challenged, it becomes possible to break away and redefine notions of the common good and to explore alternative futures. In this context, a healthy suspicion of power, a lack of trust in existing systems and processes, ushers in the promise of politics – the possibility of creating new and uncharted futures.

Although democratic theory goes some distance in characterizing the functional relationship between democracy and distrust, the risk literature has also taken some initial steps down the same path. This linkage between trust, vulnerability (risk), and democratic process is made explicit within our earlier definitions of trust as distinct from other modes of social interaction. This link is also wrapped up in the complex social conditions under which democratic processes must play out. Whereas the likes of Luhmann and Giddens point to the increasing complexity of society and call for a forward looking definition of trust, Beck also points to a new class of risks in modern society that render definitions of trust in relations of familiarity to be hopelessly outmoded. These social conditions of the risk society call even more strongly for a reflexive, an institutional, and a deliberative mode of interaction between truster and trusted.

This focus on trust also links well to Beck's notion of subpolitics. As more and more people take up political activity outside of formal political institutions, we can observe a kind of subpolitical terrain emerging whereby small-scale, often individual, decisions are made that have a direct political frame of reference or achieve political significance by way of aggregation (Holzer and Sørensen 2003). Although these political activities function below the formal political apparatus, they maintain a need for legitimacy by way of formal democratic procedures. Crucial to this issue of legitimacy in small group contexts is the presence of key normative criteria – a diverse group of public

citizens discussing issues in ways that are free from manipulation (Dryzek 2000). For Beck and others, we observe this interest in politics as a precondition for a more reflexive society, a society that becomes more aware of the distribution of 'goods' and 'bads' in society and more scrutinizing of the ultimate outcome of production and regulatory regimes. What concerns Beck and others is the disturbing irony that many societal decisions are made in subpolitical environments that are also apolitical; they fail to achieve any meaningful level of democratic quality.

Responding to this important connection between the necessary conditions for reflexivity, several authors have begun to address the question of trust in the context of risk communication and risk perception. These authors identify a functional role for distrust as a check on political power and a mechanism for undertaking critical appraisals (Kasperson at al. 1999). Trettin and Musham, make the provocative statement that "in some venues of public life, trust may no longer be possible or desirable and quite possibly is not a realistic goal" (2000:412). They go on to suggest, much like the political theorists earlier, that a measure of distrust may be more warranted. In such cases, distrust would signal a more engaged and critical public, interested in asking good questions and in discussing and debating the efficacy of specific proposals and decisions. Similarly, Poortinga and Pidgeon (2003) question the value of trust in risk management situations and propose a more nuanced perspective by developing a typology of trust. This typology exists on two axes, where the vertical axis represents a general level of trust that is characterized by truthfulness, a good track record, accuracy, responsibility and so on. The horizontal axis represents the level of skepticism. In each quadrant, a corresponding type of trust is manifested under each condition (Figure 4.1). Instead of developing a theory of distrust as a counter argument to the role of trust in democratic processes, these authors propose an alternative point of view by introducing the concept of critical trust. Under conditions of high general trust and high skepticism, one may be willing to participate within a democratic process because those involved may have a history of reliability and are thought to be dealing in good faith, while at the same time be skeptical and question the accuracy of the received information. By providing this third way, between uncritical emotional acceptance on one hand and debilitating dimensions of distrust on the other,

these authors offer a way to re-articulate the role of trust and distrust in political processes.

In the next section, the case of small-scale advisory committees associated with the forest sector is presented as a type of subpolitical environment, where deliberations amongst a wide range of public interests are intended to influence local decision-making processes, not by formal linkages to the bureaucracy but by informal means involving persuasion and opinion formation. In this case, the need for legitimacy requires some adherence to the democratic norms and procedures of small-group activities. Earlier work suggests that these advisory committees meet some basic criteria for democratic legitimacy, in terms of inclusiveness and public debate (Appendix B). However, this chapter deals with the unique challenges associated with long-standing public advisory committees, where interpersonal as well as institutional forms of trust tend to build up (or sometimes decay into debilitating social relations) over years of collective activity. The next section provides an analysis of these trust dimensions in the context of public participation in natural resource management.

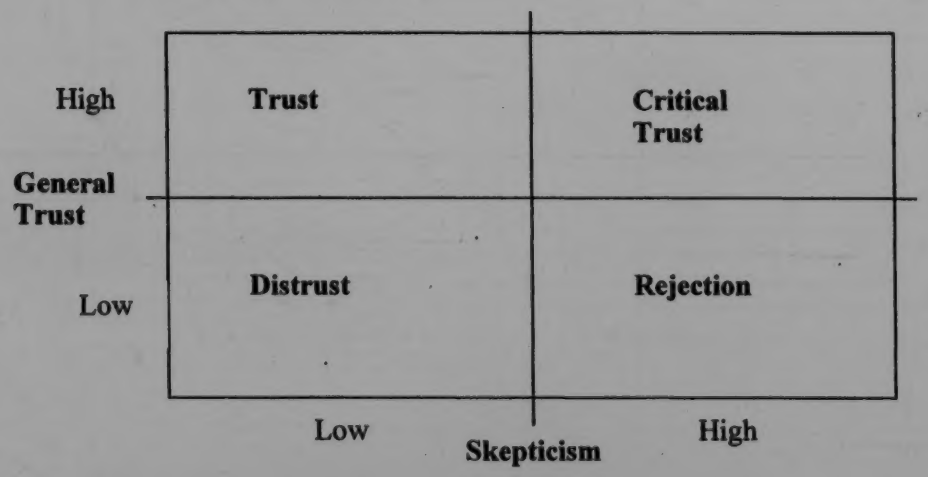

Figure 4.1. A typology of trust (Adapted from Poortinga and Pideon 2003)

Citizen committees and forest management in Alberta

A large-scale industrial forest model dominates modern forest management in Alberta, Canada (Pratt and Urquhart 1994). Access to wood and fibre products is guaranteed

through long-term management agreements on public land; where forest companies agree to take on management responsibility for sustainable harvest levels as well as a wide range of human use and wildlife values. Management responsibility also includes provision for local residents to provide input into forest planning and management decisions. In Alberta, one of the primary mechanisms for public participation in forest management is the company-sponsored public advisory committee (PAC). There are approximately 14 such committees in Alberta, composed of 10 to 15 members of the general public. In addition to these committee members, non-voting members (such as company and government officials) also play a dominant role in committee activities. One mechanism for public input involves forwarding local concerns to the PAC through a constituent representative. As an example, a local outdoor recreation club may forward concerns about a company's stated forest management goals through their chosen PAC representative. PAC members then take these concerns into consideration. In some instances, a vote is taken to either adopt or reject these concerns as a committee or to seek additional information before making a decision. If a PAC makes a recommendation to the company, the company retains the right to either accept or reject the recommendation and provides PAC members with a detailed rationale for doing so.

Less direct ways of influencing company decisions involve group-learning activities, where PAC members may not have a specific concern but they may be interested in issues such as road access management or cumulative impacts from multiple resource uses. These group interests then set the stage for presentations from subject matter specialists and other information gathering activities. These learning activities (involving information sharing and dialogue) have a collective impact on PAC members as well as company representatives.

The first PAC in Alberta was formed in 1989, but the majority of these committees have been in existence for less than seven years. In most instances, the company seeks broad-based representation from the local community to commence activities and then committee members develop 'terms of reference' for subsequent changes to group membership. Members typically include representatives from the local labour union, educational institutions, local elected officials, outdoor recreation clubs, business community, and Aboriginal and environmental organizations. Members are not

paid for their time but the company often provides meals. Those who do participate typically have the time, the intellectual curiosity or concern for forest management activities in their region, and the support of a constituent group to act as their representative.

Empirical Approach

This study involved a comparison of three company-sponsored advisory committees in Alberta. These committees were selected based on an initial telephone interview with 14 advisory committee representatives. After an initial screening, three committees were chosen to achieve maximum variation in several variables: age of group, number of company representatives, and number of sponsoring companies. These variables represent some key differences between groups and offer an opportunity to conduct comparisons across cases of considerable variation. Table 4.1 reports the year established and the basic structure of each group.

Table 4.1. Committee characteristics

	Year initiated	Number of community representatives	Number of company representatives	Number of sponsoring companies
Committee 1	Late 1980s	19	4-6	1
Committee 2	Mid 1990s	16	4	4
Committee 3	Late 1990s	15	2	1

The general methodological orientation was informed by critical ethnography. It was critical in terms of locating actors within structural and cultural settings with specific attention to relations of power and control (Morrow 1994). Critical theory provides an analytical lens where specific constraints or exclusions can be investigated and where alternative forms of social organization can be proposed (Young 2001). It was ethnographic in that several forms of inquiry were employed to gain insight into group processes and to lift into view the cultural and structural conditions associated with the role of trust in these small group settings (Thomas 1993). Empirical data came from several sources. First, over a 10-month period, researchers observed, tape-recorded, and transcribed 25 committee meetings. In addition, document analysis, including meeting minutes, handouts, and other materials related to committee work were reviewed and analyzed. The analysis of trust in these groups involved several stages and iterations of

analysis. In the first few meetings, observations of trust and distrust were not the primary point of interest. Clearly, the actions and inactions of individuals stem from multiple sources that may or may not relate to trust. In the early phases of research, the focus was on developing an understanding of 'group culture,' the commonly observed norms and procedures for interaction between different committee members and company officials. This analysis provided a initial sense about how the group operated, who was actively involved, who was less involved, what kinds of topics triggered involvement from certain people, and so on.

After documenting some of these initial differences in group culture, the difficult task of determining differences between actions and inactions and the presence or absence of trust became a key focus of inquiry. These judgments involved a collection of observations within group settings, an understanding of specific individuals and their motives for participation, and 29 follow-up interviews with PAC members.

Early findings on group culture

In the early phases of research, several methods were developed to gain some understanding of the differences and similarities from one PAC to the next. One observational technique involved recording the proportion of meeting time that any individual committee member actually spent 'holding the floor' by presenting specific information to others or by responding to the comments of others. Paying attention to who was doing the talking provided one measure of the dominant actors within each committee and whose views were most commonly heard by public and company members. This analysis demonstrated a consistent pattern of member participation, or non-participation, during committee meetings. When company representatives were observed to hold the floor for much of the meeting, this pattern remained highly consistent from one committee meeting to the next. Conversely, when committee members were observed to hold the floor, this pattern also remained consistent from meeting to meeting. These early findings offered some evidence of a group culture that varied significantly from one group to the next.

Although the early analysis revealed some evidence of important differences in deliberative style, another analysis of group discussions revealed a similar pattern of

company-dominated versus member-dominated meetings. In 10 committee meetings held by Committee 1, we observed 26 substantial discussions. A substantial discussion was determined to be a deliberative moment where at least two individuals engaged in an extended and meaningful dialogue (sometimes exploring specific points of fact or engaging in some form of substantive discussion or debate). An analysis of meeting minutes and meeting transcriptions shows that committee members initiated six of those discussions and company representatives (or other government advisors to the committee) initiated 20 discussions. Therefore, early findings on group culture were consistent with an overall pattern of company-dominated meetings in Committees 1 and 2 and member-dominated meetings in Committee 3 (see Table 4.2).

Table 4.2. Committee discussions

	Number of meetings	Substantial discussions	Committee member initiates discussion
Committee 1	10	26	6
Committee 2	6	15	5
Committee 3	9	18	12

During the early phases of observation and analysis, these inter-group differences provided a point of interest and some concern. On one hand, many applied social scientists make a strong claim that interpersonal and institutional trust is crucial to the success of small group deliberation and outcomes.[1] This link is somewhat intuitive to the extent that trust becomes a taken-for-granted component of group success. But the early findings from PAC meetings seemed to confound this functional relationship, whereby the culture of some groups had a dampening effect on the quality of discussion, the vigorousness of debate and the range of ideas and issues under consideration. Moreover, this variation appeared to coincide with the variation in 'familiarity-like' relation between members of a committee. Where committee members shared a long history of meetings, discussions, and common knowledge, or where the level of inclusiveness was somewhat limited (truncated), this dampening of public spiritedness, and a lack of connection to the

[1] In addition to trust factors, the applied literature on public participation provides a wide range of criteria associated with successful small group processes. Although this chapter deals strictly with the question of trust, a wider range of criteria can be applied to an analysis of democratic quality. See Tuler and Webler (1999) and Rowe and Frewer (2000) for examples.

larger public discourse on forest management, appeared to coincide. Not knowing for sure if this observed variation in deliberative quality was indeed related to trust or distrust, it did appear to coincided with the level of familiarity between PAC members and sponsoring agents. In an attempt to disentangle some of these differences between trust and distrust or other factors at play (i.e, fear or intimidation), the early findings warranted a closer assessment of within and between committee events. In the following sections, we look more closely at several 'events' and 'non-events' with a view to understanding the interpersonal dynamics and institutional mechanisms involved in the trusting and non-trusting relationship.

The familiarity of non-events

To examine some of these trust-related issues in the context of small group deliberation, several deliberative events and non-events are documented below. Part of the challenge in observational research of this nature is to explore not only the committee events that are triggered by trust or distrust, but also to explore non-events that are triggered by trust or distrust. Lukes (1974) articulates this challenge most poignantly in reminding us that the second and third dimensional views of power are often codified within events where discussions do not take place and decisions are not made. With the one-dimensional view of power, the focus is on specific behaviours and conflicts that are observable within a group context. These events are relatively straightforward to document. The more challenging dimensions of power involve a critique of this behavioural focus, and an examination of the covert inconsistencies that exist between conflicting discourses and their associated decisions and non-decisions (two-dimensional view). The three-dimensional view of power takes this analysis one step further by focusing on the ways in which specific agendas, discourses, and value systems are adopted and internalized by others to the extent that the interests of those in power become shared interests of those on the margins.

PAC participants can be characterized in several ways. PAC members may be trustful of those in power and attend meetings to listen and to become informed about forest management practices and contemporary issues. Participants may also be distrustful of those in power, feel like there is little hope in changing the system and

attend primarily to observe trends within the industry (interpersonal and institutional forms of trust are lacking). These individuals are generally un-involved in the deliberative process. In contrast, active PAC participants trust those in power and want to actively engage dissenting discourses as a way of protecting positions of interest (i.e. employment). There are also individuals who distrust those in power but find the PAC a constructive place to engage in debates and to challenge the status quo (some level of trust that the processes and the outcomes are fair). Figure 4.2 provides a schematic of these power relations. Members in these later categories who are involved but who come to the process with varying levels and types of trust are the most active and engage PAC members.

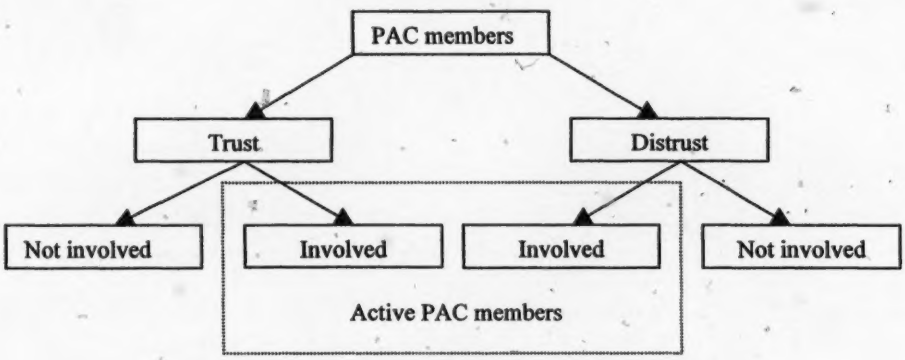

Figure 4.2. A trust-based schematic of active and inactive PAC members

The analysis that follows is focused primarily on the two-dimensional view of power. This view pays attention to situations where conflict is present but also where conflict perhaps should exist. How does one observe a non-event and the internalization of values? In this case, the reference point for a non-event was identified within the larger context of forest management. Issues, challenges, and conflicts existing within the larger forest management discourse are likely to exist within smaller deliberative settings, especially in settings that are characterized by inclusiveness and constructive interaction. Also, certain issues were observed to take on a critical and contested nature in one committee but not another: thus signaling an examination of conditions that either promote or suppress critical inquiry.

In committees characterized by high familiarity between members and company officials, non-events were observed to occur on a regular basis. This kind of trust involved a shared history and a sense of shared values and common objectives. One example relates to the development of key performance criteria by which government and third-party evaluators assess levels of achievement toward certain forest management standards. Often referred to as a sustainable forest management (SFM) plan, the document identifies key goals and performance indicators in a wide range of biophysical and socio-economic domains. This document provides one of the primary opportunities for committee members and other experts and laypeople to influence forest management practices. In other committees within Alberta, debates about the content of SFM plans have engulfed dozens of meetings and many hours, where company officials, experts, and laypeople debated issues such as protected areas and riparian zone management. In the context of high interpersonal trust (familiarity), however, these discussions and debates did not take place – the SFM plan review process was a non-event. During one meeting, a company official presented the SFM plan to committee members and invited feedback prior to the following meeting. At the next meeting, the company official made this statement:

> *The last meeting we talked about our SFM objectives and indicators and passed out where we were at in that process and requested feedback from the members. Since that time, I have not received anything from any of the members, so we are continuing on with our process and coordinating our SFM plan.*

This type of committee inaction represented a central tendency for committee with high levels of familiarity. Referring back to Figure 4.2, this committee included members who were mostly on the left side of the ledger (involved and uninvolved trusters) who were generally on side with company plans. Several other committee members from the right side of the ledger (distrusters) were present but chose not to participate. For some individuals, this lack of participation related to a degree of intimidation and also to some sense of resignation that a single dissenting voice could make little difference at this stage. *For years now, commitments never seem to happen.* From a company perspective, however, familiarity translated into efficiencies for the committee and sponsoring company. Company plans were not bogged down by extensive discussion and debate

during the public review process. On the other hand, limited critical appraisal and limited debated on these key forest management documents represented a sharp contrast to the discourse in other PAC settings and in the larger public sphere.

The institutional character of political events

In contrast to non-politics and non-events that were observed to be in concert with setting with high levels of familiarity, political events are much more straightforward to observe and document. While some may question the characterization and validity of a non-event (such as the one outlined above), events marked by conflict and debate are much more difficult to deny. However, one of the committees under observation was not simply more acrimonious and conflict ridden; the types of political events that emerged in this committee were characterized by diverse public opinions, a freedom to speak one's mind, and the maintenance of positive social relationships. In other words, discussion and debate revealed a lack of familiarity but a willingness and confidence to participate actively in committee deliberations.

At the time of this study, a document dealing with the 'operation ground rules' for forest companies was under development by several forest companies and was presented to several PACs for information purposes and public comment. In the spirit of 'keeping PAC members informed' about policy and planning developments in the forest sector, these kinds of presentations were common at committee meetings. At one point in Committee 3, the information session turned into a much more involved set of events, where members became interested in and critical of the content of this document. After realizing that committee members wanted to spend more time reviewing the operating ground rules, a company official stated that *this document was sent out to the [PAC] to review prior to the meeting and we can look at specific ground rules as needed.* This comment precipitated a lengthy discussion about what should be reviewed and how it should take place. One committee member commented that *there are positive things to say on these rules as a lot has changed. However, I think industry has overlooked a number of things in the ground rules.* Committee members proceeded to point out deficiencies in the ground rules document: poorly conceived, fraught with contradictory

statements, lack of clear vision and limited insight into the management of cumulative impacts and road access issues.

These concerns are certainly debatable, but the point here is to demonstrate the willingness of committee members to engage company officials in a critical appraisal of company planning and management documents. Throughout this somewhat tense series of exchanges between company officials and committee members, the meeting hardly broke the rules of civility. It demonstrated that despite deeply seated differences of opinion, the committee maintained a positive working relationship and was more than willing to critically examine very detailed documentation on forest operations. Although this document was presented to other PACs involved in this study, this was the only committee that spent a substantial amount of time reviewing the operating ground rules.

Unlike the previous analysis of a non-event, this committee appeared not to share the same level of familiarity: the kind of interpersonal trust that is derived from a common set of values and norms upon which to judge a situation and to take action. The extent to which members of this committee took company representatives by surprise, the willingness of members to critically debate company official and each other on points of fact suggests that the trust-producing conditions of familiarity were less prevalent. In contrast, trust appeared to reside within the less personal and perhaps the more institutional structures of the committee. A willingness to speak one's mind, to engage in a vigorous deliberative process, to feel protected by the norms and procedures of the committee itself, provide a clear link to what Zucker (1986) defines as an institution-based production of trust.

From trust to critical trust

During follow-up interviews with PAC members, a number of perspectives on the role of trust in PAC settings were discussed with committee members. Within the high-trust PACs, a great deal of confidence was expressed towards the sponsoring forest company and towards forest management activities in their region. One long-standing committee member commented that *if there were a graph to be drawn of it, it would probably be in the first two years on the [PAC], because that sense of trust develops very rapidly. And then it's just sort of a booster shot once in awhile.* Coupled with this high

level of familiarity, a shared history and common set of understandings about forest management becomes a troubling development for some advisory committees. Where some committee sponsors may find this build-up of familiarity within groups to represent an important learning dimension of committee involvement and an opportunity for more efficient group processes, for other sponsors it translates into long-term viability problems. Given that the agenda for committee meetings is established primarily through the identification of local forest issues, a lack of pressing local issues makes it difficult to establish an agenda for future meetings. As one committee chairperson explained, *it was also very frustrating with nothing coming forward that you, that youcould deal with, or resolve and there were just no problems coming forward.*

In contrast to these high levels of familiarity between PAC members and their sponsors, a small group of committee members maintained highly distrustful views of the sponsoring company – questioning their motives and expressing no confidence in the effectiveness of company-sponsored PACs. One member expressed this frustration in clear terms.

> *I really thought that there might be an opportunity to provide real input into real changes. I've seen that that isn't what really occurs. And now it's come to a point where I feel it's, it's almost a show-and-tell by the company where you show up for dinner, they tell you what they're going to do, they control the agenda, and that's what is there. So from our perspective, now I think we're really going there to see what direction the company is going in and, if there's a way that we can influence through other bodies, then we'll use that information to influence.*

Motivated to participate in order to receive information about forest company plans and activities, some committee members maintained this distrustful attitude toward 'real' opportunities for public influence. In fact, during the mid-1990s, several prominent environmental organizations decided to formally withdraw from these company-sponsored deliberative activities, citing that *their influence was not being effective, that they weren't able to effect change through involvement in these processes*. Clearly those who maintain strong views in opposition to status quo forest management have found the company-sponsored PAC process to be a difficult environment in which to sustain alternative or dissenting views. Many of these people have chosen to concentrate their political resources and extend their influence through other means. This departure leaves

a somewhat truncated representation of public values that has compromised the legitimacy of some PAC processes.

As a counterpoint to these polarized views on trust within PAC settings, some committee members exhibited strong concern for issues in forest management, but they also exhibited a degree of trust in forest company representatives and the PAC process. These characteristics were found among members who made a commitment to participate in spite of their concerns about status quo forest management. *I don't think they are, you know, maliciously destroying the environment. I think they just have a different set of values. And some of them, I think have some values that they've established a long, long time ago, and they haven't kept pace with change.* Whereas some PAC members see their role as an agent of change, a way of transforming the values of others through dialogue and mutual learning, others are supportive of the PAC process while also realizing that many of the recommendations will not be realized, at best, for several generations. *A lot of people are sort of in the same position where they've made recommendations, but in reality, it takes time to see what changes will take place on the ground.* These perspectives point to dimensions of distrust, being fully aware of the limits associated with a company-sponsored process. But they also point to dimensions of trust in their willingness to engage the process, create discussions and debates, and make recommendations that they hope will change the course of forest management in Alberta.

Reconstructing deliberative space

This empirical exploration offers a critical counterpoint to much of the published literature on trust and public deliberation. Through observational research, the problems associated with high levels of familiarity within group settings are demonstrated -- where citizens become less skeptical, less critical, and less interested in asking questions and challenging dominant discourses. Whereas the applied literature on public participation, and a good deal of the literature on trust and risk management, seems to suggest that all sources of trust play constructive roles in group outcomes, this analysis suggests that all sources of trust are not everywhere and always a good thing. In fact, high levels of familiarity may represent a kind of corrosive agent to the maintenance of democratic norms, especially in long-term group environments. In these settings, agendas were

dominated by company officials, discussions on key planning and policy initiatives did not take place, and committee members were much more willing to take on a passive role in group settings – relying primarily on a cultivated sense of trust in company and government officials to do the right thing.

Consistent with the literature espousing the functional role of distrust, this empirical exploration uncovers some of the positive features of distrust in small group settings. Poortinga and Pidgeon (2003) provide an important point of departure for this literature by articulating a role for critical trust that is characterized by high levels of general trust as well as high levels of skepticism. At the same time, these citizens are skeptical about the direction of industrial forestry and seek change by actively engaging company and government officials within a deliberative setting. They are also realistic about the pace of change and are willing to work within a democratic process. Consistent with Figure 1, these individuals exhibit a degree of general trust coupled with a degree of skepticism.

These dimensions of trust are observable within the PAC context, where citizens trust the process and trust the sponsors, to the extent that those involved have a good track record and are thought be acting in good faith. This notion of general trust and skepticism appears to be consistent with the perspectives of Warren (1999) regarding the distinction between values and character-based sources of trust (familiarity) and the institutional bases for trust. For the committee who lacked this familiarity, but enjoyed some level of institutional trust in the norms and procedures of the committee, the quality of committee deliberations was vastly improved.

This study also demonstrates the significant variation in group culture from one PAC to the next. Although the structure of all 14 PACs is essentially identical in terms of sponsorship and primary objectives, there remains a great deal of variation in the democratic quality of group activities. The concern in this chapter is the extent to which trust is a component of group culture and plays a role in limiting group discussion and vigorous debate on contemporary issues in forest management. Obviously, other factors impact democratic quality, such as a broad representation of public values within group settings, and the formal procedures by which meetings are conducted. However, this study points to some troubling linkages between trust and democratic quality.

By drawing these conclusions, we are faced with the awkward (and perhaps perverse) position of promoting a role for more skeptical and more discordant public citizens. Perhaps this proposition becomes somewhat more palatable if the objectives of company-sponsored advisory committees are taken into consideration. Primarily, advisory committees serve as a mechanism for public review of corporate management and development plans. By subjecting forest management plans to the litmus test of rigorous public review, companies receive what is commonly defined as a 'social license to operate.' In other words, PACs serve to legitimate corporate operations. In addition to this litmus test for public opinion, advisory committees can promote better decision making by incorporating local, traditional, and contextualized knowledge into the decision making process. When it comes to meeting these objectives, an active and engaged committee membership provides an important source of legitimacy in this context. Over months and years of committee meetings, however, as company officials and citizens dialogue and engage issues with each other, levels of familiarity begin to build. At the same time, the values and opinions of PAC members begin to converge with the values and opinions of company officials and other industry advocates.

From a company perspective, this build-up of trust and associated values-creep has strong appeal. Citizens become educated and become champions for corporate activity within the region. But in serving as a legitimating tool, these long-term outcomes become highly tenuous. Perhaps one of the quickest ways to destroy public confidence, to destroy the legitimacy of a public advisory process, is to suggest that company officials have 'educated' committee members and, in turn, these members are now being used as a sounding board for public opinion. Clearly the effectiveness of the litmus test rests on the strength of the public review process – and a citizen committee that remains anchored to the constellation of discourses on forest management.

Without inviting acrimony and an environment of distrust that destroys interpersonal and institutional relationships, is it possible to cultivate a critical trust, to re-politicize these important nodes of subpolitical activity in the forest sector? Certainly there are numerous examples of failed deliberative processes resulting from high levels of distrust and rejection. Local advocates have walked away from processes, taking with them important values and sources of knowledge. Companies have closed down more

inclusive public processes, opting for more efficient ways of generating public approval. As an alternative to these less deliberative measures, several remedies may be available to company-sponsored advisory committees.

In an effort to maintain a more critically engaged membership that is securely fastened to the larger public discourse, several options may prove useful. (1) Seek a broad range of public values. Whereas highly valued committee members are often thought to be politically 'centrist', the most motivated, active, and engaged committee members were found to be those with strong advocacy positions. At the same time, these advocates agreed to adhere to the norms and procedures of small group democratic processes – good listening, a willingness to learn and compromise. (2) Invite committee members to drive the agenda. Committee members were more critically engaged if the group culture allowed fewer steering tactics from company officials. Critical (institutional) trust thrived in settings where company officials played the role of observer. (3) Tap into the public discourse on forest management. Committee members with advocacy positions provided important sources of information, but a variety of expert opinions, from diverse perspectives, strengthened the link between the content of committee deliberations and the larger public discourse.

The Alberta PAC experience provides a window into the subpolitical terrain of the forest sector. These public spaces operate below the radar screen of most citizens, yet they provide an important legitimating tool for industrial forestry in the province. Similar to other company-sponsored advisory committees, they are often characterized by high levels of interpersonal trust between company officials and committee members – the kind of trust that tends to build up over years of face-to-face contact and personal interaction. In contrast to the published literature espousing the role of trust in positive group outcomes, this empirical exploration represents a point of caution. Not all forms of trust are conducive to robust deliberative activity. Rather, a critical trust (that is more skeptical and questioning and also more trusting of the institutional characteristics under which deliberation takes place) may be more important in these small group settings. By re-invigorating and re-politicizing these deliberative spaces, company-sponsored advisory committees may remain an important component of the democratic process within contemporary forest management practices.

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Chapter Five
EPILOGUE

Putting it all together

This dissertation pulls together three manuscripts that explore the structure and the activities of private sector advisory committees in Alberta. Chapter two provides a short history of public participation in the forest sector, positioning the company-sponsored advisory committee as the latest chapter in this history. With a specific focus on recent developments in Alberta, we can observe a de-centering of public participation in forest management – a history that is premised on neo-liberal creeds that favour decentralization and the efficiencies of markets. Coupled with these strong ideological forces, this repositioning of public participation activities also provides some important avenues to address the challenges presented by increasing cultural pluralism (divergent social values) along with increasing scientific complexities. Given the challenges of these social facts, de-centered public participation activities offer an outlet by garnering "home-base" support for entry into an increasingly heterogeneous and international constellation of public discourses on forest management.

After positioning the advisory committee within a historical context, Chapter three offers an intimate experience with three advisory committees in Alberta. By developing the notion of a 'positive public moment' (as a series of somewhat-fleeting moments within the life of a committee), we develop some understanding of the emergent qualities of these moments and how they are either enhanced (encouraged) or inhibited (discouraged). 'Interest-based representatives' were found to be a particularly important catalyst in the emergence of these moments. Committees with a preponderance of knowledgeable and energetic advocates were observed to promote such moments more often than committees with 'common-good' representatives. Likewise, committees that enjoyed a degree of autonomy from the sponsoring forest company were observed to be more public-spirited and tended not to be as prone to capitulate to dominant discourses (consensus in motion).

In chapter four, the role of trust and distrust is presented as a crucial factor in the quality of group deliberation. Although the published literature on public participation

generally treats trust as a valuable factor in the success of group deliberations, this manuscripts sends a shot across the bow, or at least a point of caution, regarding some of the potential dysfunctional elements of trust within small-group deliberative settings. Adding to a fledging body of literature on the notion of 'critical trust,' this empirical exploration shows the conditions under which high levels of general trust, coupled with high levels of skepticism embody the social conditions for public-spirited moments to flourish.

Taking a higher-level view of these three manuscripts, several observations can be made about the status of public participation under conditions of private sponsorships and about the future of public participation activities more generally. First, clearly the de-centered nature of public participation has its advantages. Given the proliferation of these advisory committees across the province and the country, there are perhaps more opportunities than ever for local people to become informed and involved in decisions that have a direct impact on the local forest landscape. These people provide important local and contextualized knowledge that can improve the quality of local decisions and can foster a strong sense of good will and cooperation between local agencies and institutions. In this way, these 'deliberative spaces' serve to foster the kinds of interpersonal trust, social cohesion, and 'civicness' that have become so popular in the social science literature (as exemplified in the work of Robert Putnam).

Second, clearly the company-sponsored advisory committee is sometimes stubbornly deficient at meeting the standards for healthy public discussion and debate. True to form as a critical inquiry into these deliberative spaces, this dissertation documents areas of weakness that include a lack of inclusiveness, limited autonomy, and asymmetries of power and control. Holding these advisory committees against the ideal of communicative action, this analysis shows the multiple ways in which certain ideals are not achieved, and are perhaps un-achievable under conditions of private sponsorship. Taking the position that dissent is a valuable commodity, this study illustrates the ways in which dissent is either enhanced or discouraged within small-group settings. It echoes the work of Dewey and Habermas in its call for a more robust and re-politicized manifestation of the public sphere – one that is cognizant of the limits to achieving these

ideals within conditions of cultural pluralism and scientific complexity, but nonetheless committed to these ends as a core project within modernity.

Third, there remains some haziness about the labels that are used to describe these advisory committees. Taken together, the analysis does not lend itself to a swift and decisive summary of advisory committee characteristics. At least three caricatures are possible here. (1) As a diverse representation of public citizens, deliberating about matters of public concern, these committees are most optimistically thought of as a fully functioning public sphere. (2) As a group of local stakeholders governed by somewhat truncated representation and a limited mandate to deliberate on matters of public concern, these committees may be thought of as a single engine of discourse, amongst a constellation of discourses within the public sphere that is no more or less distorted than another. (3) As an industry-sponsored advisory process, these advisory committees may be thought of as a completely co-opted collection of mostly handpicked local stakeholders who are used by industry in instrumental ways to assist in legitimating forest management and in amplifying an industry-oriented discourse into the public sphere. From this empirical work, all three characterizations are present to some degree. Yet no single statement is adequate.

Theorists postulate that the public sphere should exist somewhere in between the individual and the state. Yet, historians might argue that the most intense and meaningful sub-political discourses (functioning below the formal political apparatus) are often closely associated with state or private institutions. Under these structural conditions, the potential for distortion becomes more acute but at the same time, the potential to influence policy elites is also enhanced. In the Alberta context, debates will continue regarding the merits of public advisory committees. This study does not present a crushing critique, but it does point to several important structural weaknesses that represent an 'Achillies heel.' To the extent that public advisory committees serve a legitimating function and an instrument that is designed primarily for public communication, these structural weaknesses will continue to haunt the private sector.

From research to practice

As an applied social scientist, who cultivates ongoing contact with a wide range of actors in the forest sector, I have a sense that the theories and analysis contained in these chapters have missed the mark. They fail to speak clearly and directly to the issues and concerns that face the forestry practitioner and the layperson that is struggling from month to month to improve the quality of committee activities. As a scholarly project, these chapters represent a contribution to the published literature – to ongoing debates and arguments that are presented in a language that is coded for the social scientist. In response to this shortcoming, there remain some uncompleted extensions of this dissertation that are an important ethical component of my obligation to those who participated in this study. Following on Dryzek's (1990) constructive moment for critical theory, the relationships that were forged through months of observations and interviews provide an important opportunity to offer conceivable and practical alternatives to the status quo. This section describes two of these extension initiatives.

One initiative is titled, 'Best practices for public participation in sustainable forest management.' With the assistance of several other colleagues, we are embarking on an ambitious program to prepare a 'toolbox' that will allow a forest practitioner to select from a wide range of public participation activities (from mail surveys to deliberative polls) and put together a comprehensive public participation program. A major component to this 'best practices guide' is an evaluation framework that can be used to assess to define and assess a 'successful' public participation program. Based on a review of the published literature, Table 5.1 attempts to distill an extensive array of potential criteria into a core set that can provide some guidance to managers.

Although it is written in plain language, the core elements correspond with several key features of the public sphere. The idea of 'breadth' as a core element corresponds with the idea of inclusiveness and the subcategories under this element address issues of external and internal exclusion. Similarly, the idea of 'depth' as a core element corresponds with the idea of deliberation or discourse. Issues of dialogue, transparency, and reflexivity have important parallels to the discursive designs that are proposed within deliberative democratic theory. Similarly, the elements associated with

'outcomes' are closely associated with specific objectives in the public participation and planning literature.

Table 5.1. Evaluation criteria for a public participation program

Core Elements	*Successful Public participation tools will...*
Breadth	Incorporate a wide range of public values (Representation)
	Be accessible to all public interests (Accessibility)
	Allow for new participants over time (Evolution)
	Provide anonymity where needed (Freedom from intimidation)
Depth	Foster a two-way flow of information (Listening and dialogue)
	Be flexible in scope (Flexibility)
	Provide opportunities for frank and open discussion (Deliberation)
	Promote independent input from scientific and value-based sources (Transparency and credibility)
	Promote positive personal and institutional relationships (Relationship-building)
Outcomes	Influence the decision making process (Influence)
	Improve the quality of decisions (Effectiveness)
	Contribute to public and knowledge (Mutual learning and awareness)
	Reward or provide incentives (Reciprocity)
	Be cost effective (Cost-effectiveness)

Another initiative (closely tied to the first) is titled, 'A practitioner's guide to deliberative practices in natural resource management.' Whereas the first document deals with a wide range of public participation activities that may or may not contain a deliberative component, this document describes specific public participation activities that contain a prominent deliberative element. Focus groups, citizen panels, electronic discussion, and deliberative polls represent a few of the options in the practitioner's toolbox. Starting from the premise that most forest managers are not experts on deliberative democracy, this guidebook provides a primer on many of the issues that are crucial to undertaking deliberative activities. It also provides a detailed set of instructions to move through the stages of a deliberative process, along with additional reference material on all of the specific deliberative activities that are described.

In addition to these writing projects, results were presented to advisory committees as oral presentations, where issues specific to the committee were presented as a kind of 'member check,' confirming that conclusions made from observation were

shared by members of the committee. These presentations also provided an opportunity to discuss areas where the committee might make some improvements. For some of these committees, basic improvements included elements such as the use of a paid facilitator and the use of more diverse sources of information. The following quotation comes from a committee member who highlighted some areas of change in their committee.

> Recent feedback from our committee is that more time should be reserved for group discussion instead of the lion's share going to guest speakers – and that has been addressed. We are also cognizant of trying to present all sides of an issue - i.e. while we may have a local representative speak to an issue, we try and get an objective "expert" in the field to come up and speak to that issue as well at a subsequent meeting.

These extension initiatives provide an opportunity to give something back to the committees that were involved in this project and to the larger community of practitioners who are charged with providing opportunities for lay involvement in forest management.

Project limitations

There are several limitations to this project that deserve some attention. First, although the study set out to improve upon our understanding of advisory committees, the scope of study remains limited. For some committees who have as much as 15 years of history, a 10-month window of observation provides only a snapshot perspective. Personal interview with some long-standing committee members provided some historical context, but this interview data also confirmed that the nature and intensity of group activity varies (sometimes dramatically) from year to year. In a conversation with one longstanding member, he commented that, *every once in awhile, I think we need some kind of sense of renewal. And we're ready for a sense of renewal right now.* He went on to comment on the ebb and flow of group enthusiasm from year to year, based mostly on the kinds of issues under review. Although these limits on observation may have some real consequences for how committees are assessed, a focus on 'group culture' provided an opportunity to investigate group characteristics that were likely to be more long-standing and somewhat entrenched – building up over some history together as a commonly shared set of norms and expectations.

A second limitation to this study also deals with scope on another dimension. As noted in the introduction, this study set out to investigate the advisory committee as a kind of public sphere in the forest sector – a locale where a broad cross-section of public citizens could engage one another, debate matters of public concern, and influence decision makers through various direct and indirect communication channels. Through early observations and other published literature, this notion of the advisory committee as a 'primary source' gave way to thinking about advisory committees in much more modest terms, as a single source (or node) of public communication. Under this revised research framework, a comprehensive assessment of the public sphere in the forest sector would include many other sources of communication (i.e. government, industry, scientific, tourism and recreation, and the environmental communities). All of these sources of communication have an influence on the public sphere and on the company-sponsored advisory committee. Although this study is limited to an investigation of one source, all of these sources deserve more attention. Collectively, they form the wild complex of competing discourse that is the public sphere.

Future Research

Following on these project limitations, an ongoing program of research in this area could take several paths to expand the scope of study. This would involve an ongoing analysis of various dimensions of the public sphere relative to the forest sector and natural resource management more generally. As a more specific extension to the existing research, there are several options. With data that has been collected to date, several alternative theoretical frameworks would provide important insights on specific events within the deliberative space. Framing theory offers insight into how specific groups and individuals are able to construct compelling and credible arguments that are sustained within a public discourse and lead to action (Benford and Snow 2000). In the context of advisory committees, the framing of issues of concern is critical to attracting others to a particular cause and in building that cause into something that other committee members and decision makers must take seriously. As a complement to deliberative democratic theory, framing theory may provide more specific insights into how a particular alternative discourse is launched and then sustained. Various theories of organizational

behaviour (i.e. agency capture and group dynamics) may also provide important insights into the culture of these advisory committees.

Another area of inquiry with existing data would involve an analysis of the relationship between layperson and expert. Frank Fischer's (2000) work on the politics of local knowledge provides an important starting point here. His work taps into the risk society thesis at the local level and articulates the problems and challenges associated with meaningfully incorporating laypeople into decision-making processes. Fischer challenges us to rethink the role of the expert and to value local knowledge and alternative modes of rationality that are an important part of a post-positivist era. In the advisory committee context, the opportunities to incorporate lay knowledge is perhaps a great strength, yet time after time, deference to 'expertise' and hostility toward local knowledge presented serious roadblocks to understanding. A more precise examination of this lay versus expert divide would shed light on these kinds of problems that often go unexamined in the published literature.

Moving beyond the borders of Alberta, a national survey of advisory committees is currently under way, with the assistance of four other institutions. This project will attempt to survey all forest sector public advisory committees from coast to coast (approximately 1200 respondents) and identify some baseline data on committee functioning and activity. Questions pertain to the inclusiveness of group membership, perceived constraints on time and information, sources of information, opportunities for influence, and general levels of satisfaction. The study will provide some baseline data on public advisory committees and allow for the development of trend data over time.

Finally, an expanded study within the public sphere would involve a continued focus at the intersection of deliberative democratic theory and risk theory. At several points within this dissertation, a fruitful interplay took place between these two theoretical traditions. As an extension of this interplay, it would be useful to tap into a growing body of literature on the 'social amplification of risk' (Pidgeon et al. 2003). This framework attempts to uncover the dynamic processes that underscore individual and collective risk perceptions. Through various social 'stations' and information channels, risks are either minimized or amplified, and these socially constructed messages function within a logic that is often de-linked from the probabilistic logic of 'real' risk assessment.

Within this framework, advisory committees may act as a social station where risk information is absorbed, interpreted, and rebroadcast. Depending on group culture, this rebroadcast serves to minimize or to amplify risk, and compete with other risk discourses. At this stage, the social amplification of risk framework is dominated by a psychometric paradigm of individual risk perception along with some attention to institutional factors, but there remains little focus on the middle ground between personal opinion and social structure. This is an area where deliberative democratic theory and attention to the notions of public-spirited debate and reflexivity may provide important insights.

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Appendix A

THEORETICAL ORIENTATION AND RESEARCH APPROACH

To supplement the methods sections in the earlier chapters, this appendix offers an extended description of the methodological orientation and the specific research approach that was employed in this project.

Critical theory

The primary theoretical foundation for this project rests in a critical theory of society. The Frankfurt School of Social Research is credited with developing the idea of critical theory in the early 1920s in opposition to a more traditional theory of society. Traditional theory was thought to borrow too heavily from the natural sciences and was overly reductionist and deterministic. In reaction, critical theory represented a more holistic, historically sensitive, and Marxist-oriented theory. At this early stage, critical theory became associated with progress and emancipation in the face of dominant social forces: markers that maintain a strong presence within this research tradition.

In the early years of this research program (prior to WWII), the Frankfurt School focused on interdisciplinary research that attempted to understand the social, economic and psychological mechanisms associated with Marxist interpretations of social change and revolution. As years passed, however, this latent revolutionary potential was never realized. Rather, theorists observed the proletariat becoming more embedded within capitalist systems. This resulted in an increasingly strained relationship with orthodox Marxism. During this time, key theorists such as Horkheimer and Adorno (1972) developed critiques of mass culture that became a popular mode of understanding the subjugating forces of capitalist society. With specific attention to the tendency for science and technology to dominate human nature and the natural world through modes of instrumental rationality, these theorists developed a way of understanding the arrested revolutionary potential of the proletariat.

In contrast to this negative outlook, the early work of Habermas (1989) represented a more optimistic approach to an analysis of modernity. In contrast to the notion of instrumental rationality, Habermas suggests that social progress can take place

through a process of communicative rationality. In this context, communicative rationality represents a dam against the colonizing forces of science and technology by radically expanding the rational grounds for decision-making. In essence, a theory of communicative rationality is a theory of understanding, where historically identified and utopian aspirations set the standard for truthfulness, honesty, openness, transparency, and mutual understanding. It is oriented around understanding between individuals rather than the achievement of pre-defined and more individualist goals. By promoting social conditions where communicative rationality can flourish, the potential for a somewhat less revolutionary, yet significant social change can be regained.

The idea of critical theory is infused with this history of Marxist revolutionary ideas along with more recent neo-Marxist interests in the emancipatory potential of social change. As such, critical theory attempts to locate actors within structural and cultural settings with specific attention to relations of power and control (Morrow 1994). Implicit in this critical theory is an understanding of structural conditions associated with class and power, but also a strong emphasis on human agency. In other words, social interactions take place on a structured stage, but these structures are perhaps less constraining than some might claim. Along these lines, Forester argues that we need to pay close attention to the historical stage upon which any action takes places, but we also need to acknowledge that this "same stage can support a bewildering variety of actions, judgments, deceits, strategies, and expressions" (1992:47). This series of research papers provides a case in point. Where the structural staging of private-sector advisory committees suggests a limited range of actions, in contrast, we observe a wide variety of outcomes derived primarily through human agency.

Set within a critical theory of society is a concept of the public sphere that provides an important stage for communicative actions to take place. Originally formulated by Habermas as existing within the coffeehouses of seventeenth and eighteenth century Europe, these public spaces provided a venue for citizens to generate independent knowledge of public issues and challenge the dominant forces of church and state. Contemporary theorists continue to employ a notion of the public sphere, although it is now formulated in less monolithic terms and is thought of more abstractly as a "wild complex" of competing discourses within society (Habermas 1996). Feminists theorists

have also successfully argued for a more inclusive notion of rationality that encompasses forms of story telling, rhetoric, and greetings. Although expanded and modified in various ways, the notion of a public sphere remains a strong theoretical underpinning for democratic theorists and others who are interested in developing normative criteria, ideal types, and discursive designs (Dryzek 2000).

Critical ethnography

Coupling critical theory with a case study research design brings this study of advisory committees into close affinity with the critical ethnographic research tradition. According to one definition, critical ethnography is "a practical, value-laden science that generates the knowledge needed to foster a democratic society and a critical citizenry" (Foley 2002:472). It produces knowledge as a means to consciousness-raising and provides key openings to challenge the status quo. According to another definition, critical ethnography "takes seemingly mundane events, even repulsive ones, and reproduces them in a way that exposes broader social processes of control, taming, power imbalance, and the symbolic mechanisms that impose one set of preferred meanings or behaviours over others" (Thomas 1993:9). This research project is very much in line with these definitions of critical ethnography. It is critical in so far as it "focuses attention on relations of power and hegemony and their contingencies" (Forester 1992:47) and it is ethnographic to the extent that the research approaches focuses on the "culture" of advisory committees, makes use of multiple sources of data, and employs traditional ethnographic methods such as participant observations, key informants, and personal interviews. The idea of culture in this case is thought of as:

> A set of solutions devised by a group of people to meet specific problems posed by situations they face in common…This notion of culture as a living, historical product of group problem solving allows an approach to cultural study that is applicable to any group, be it a society, a neighborhood, a family, a dance band, or an organization and its segments (Van Maanen and Barley 1985:33 – cited in Thomas 1993).

Culture is this context goes beyond an anthropological study of traditional cultures to a study of group settings where common ways of understanding, of behaviour, and action are cultivated over a period of months or years.

Comparative case studies

Comparative case study design provided the organizing framework to primary data collection. Case study research provided an opportunity to study the "particularity and complexity of a single case" (Stake 1995:xi) but then to compare those unique aspects of the case to other cases of a similar nature. As in most scholarly traditions, proponents disagree on the basic orientation of the case study method, and two prominent authors in case study design are no exception. Yin (2002) and Stake (1995) articulate compelling, yet distinct, philosophical underpinnings to the case study research method. Yin takes on a distinctly positivistic flavor that informs his criticisms of status quo case study research and his prescriptions for research design, analysis, and report writing. This perspective emerges most strongly in statements like: "The research design … is a logical model of proof that allows the researcher to draw inferences concerning the causal relations among the variables under investigation" (Yin 2002). Yin follows in this vein with strong tests of construct, internal, and external validity and reliability. In contrast to Yin, Stake takes a distinctly non-positivist perspective towards case study research. The flavor of his approach is summarized in the idea that "important human actions are seldom simply caused and usually not caused in ways that can be discovered" (1995). Stake also places strong emphasis on the iterative process of discovery, whereby the emergence of meaning mysteriously evolves from a "reading and rereading of the accounts, by deep thinking and through this process understanding creeps forward and your page is printed" (1995:73).

Although I find Stake's approach resonating most strongly with the tradition of critical theory and ethnography, I find that both authors provide important practical ideas for the case study researcher. Specifically, Yin's discussion of theoretical frameworks is useful. He suggests that the role of theory development, prior to data collection, is one point of difference between case studies and methods such as ethnography. Similarly, Stake's emphasis on multiple views, additional interpretations, and the subjectivity of interpretations and assertions that emerge from the case, remind me of the profoundly complex nature of case study research and the value of this method when our cases merge seamlessly (and messily) into the larger social milieu.

Stake (1995) makes a distinction between intrinsic case studies and instrumental cases studies. For the intrinsic case, this primary orientation is not around a particular

research question or a theoretical problem, but the case provides an 'open' opportunity to learn about that particular case. In contrast, for the instrumental case, the researcher comes to the field with a particular question or theoretical issue where the case can provide some insight. In this way, the issues become dominant. Given that this research project focused on some driving questions in democratic theory and used the cases to inform and revise our theoretical understandings, this research clearly fits into the category of an instrumental case study design. Theory informed an original interest in private-sector advisory committees as nodes of the public sphere, and specific questions around the role of representation, autonomy, and trust guided the organization and output of case study data.

Field entry and data collection

Field entry began in early 2001 with a telephone survey of all 14 functioning public advisory committees in the province of Alberta, Canada. This survey provided some basic information on the composition and functioning of the group: when the group was started, how many public members, how many non-voting members (advisors), how often the group meets, and major strengths and weaknesses. From this survey data, three advisory committees were chosen in an effort to gain maximum variation on several key variables. These variables included the age of the group, the number of non-voting members (advisors), and the number of sponsoring companies (because several groups had more than one corporate sponsor). These variables where chosen as an initial way to include a maximum level of structural variation into the study of "group culture."

Once the groups were chosen, field entry involved a process of contacting individual advisory committees, asking to make a formal project presentation and requesting access to the group for a period of 12 months. All three groups agreed to this request along with a request to conduct several data collection activities. Data collection involved: taped transcripts of each meeting, extensive field notes during observations, and an analysis of secondary documents such as meeting minutes and committee handouts. To supplement this committee-level data, 29 personal interviewers (taped and transcribed) were conducted with committee members in the months immediately following group observations. These semi-structured interviews provided an opportunity

to discuss the events of the committee with individual members and seek further insight into specific issues of group functioning such as representation, autonomy, and trust.

Data analysis and interpretation

Following data collection activities, all interview transcripts were read and all committee meetings recordings were again reviewed and compared against the field notes. During this process, additional notes were recorded on the major features of the data. For instance, when issues such as the Alberta Trapper's Association position paper were introduced, this particular issues was tracked from meeting to meeting, thereby developing a detailed chronology of events that sometimes spanned several committee meetings and involved several personal interviews and secondary documents. Through this process of reviewing taped meetings and transcripts, a detailed personal log was constructed that became an important source of condensed and organized information on the major issues and themes in each committee.

As a form of 'member check,' case background documents were prepared for all three committees from the detailed personal logs. These three documents (approximately 4000 words each) reviewed the local social and economic history of the town and the forest industry. They also reviewed the functioning and activities of the advisory committee and related some of the significant events in each group. This purely descriptive document was returned to several members of each group to check facts and to confirm that, in general, the facts about the group and the activities of the group were consistent with my interpretation of events. Although not directly incorporated in these three research papers, they provided an opportunity to summarize a large amount of primary data and to confirm some preliminary themes in each group with individual committee members. These background documents were not included as an appendix to preserve the anonymity of individual advisory committees.

In this process of data analysis and interpretation, patterns did not emerge from a careful coding of phrases and segments, but from a broader assessment of pattern that emerged over several months of observation. In some cases, these patterns were re-enforced by more quantitative assessments of "who is talking and for how long" or by examining the frequency of certain events (frequency of expert presentations or number

of committee member initiating discussion). But in general terms, analysis took place through an iterative progression between theory and data, a close examination of what the theory says and what the data is telling me. Stake refers to this kind of iterative process in stating, "the page does not write itself, but by finding, for analysis, the right ambiance, the right moment, by reading and rereading the accounts, by deep thinking, then understanding creeps forward and your page is printed" (1995:73). To use the language of Thomas (1993), this interpretative process involves 'defamiliarization', where what we see and hear is revised and translated into something new.

> It is a way of distancing ourselves from the taken-for-granted aspect of what we see and allowing us to view what we have seen more critically. We take the collection of observations, anecdotes, impression, documents, and other symbolic representations of the culture we studied that seem depressingly mundane and common, and we reframe them into something new (Thomas 1993:43).

The newness that emerges from this project comes from a close examination of the culture of private sector advisory committees and the ways in which opportunities for communicative action can be realized or diminished. This approach to data analysis is very much in keeping with Stake's method, where researchers must acquire specific approaches to analysis and interpretation that work for them. The validity of this approach is not necessarily based on the reproducibility of findings, but on whether or not the findings generated by this study are valued and whether they find resonance with those who are involved in, or familiar with, private sector advisory committees.

For those more familiar with qualitative methods, this approach to interpretation and analysis may lack some detail. Some might suggest a need for more specific information on how specific segments of data were organized, how patterns were derived, and so on. Some of this detailed coding and aggregation (with the software package QRS NUD*IST Vivo) was a component of my analytical approach, but I found it to be more useful as a "data immersion" exercise than a way of reframing issues and bringing out the dominant cultural elements of each group. Rather, a form of storytelling, through the reconstruction of specific events or a series of events (vignettes) proved to be a more useful mode of organizing data and thinking about the relationship between theory and the real world.

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Appendix B

FOREST MANAGEMENT AND ADVISORY GROUPS IN ALBERTA: AN EMPIRICAL CRITIQUE OF AN EMERGENT PUBLIC SPHERE[1]

Introduction

Under what conditions can private people come together and discuss issues of public concern where rational argument, not social status, form the basis of informed consensus? This is the question Jurgen Habermas addresses in his attempt to develop the historical category of the public sphere (Habermas, 1989). Based originally in 17th and 18th Century Europe, the public sphere was manifested most ideally in the coffee houses of England. In modern society, however, the public sphere is thought of not as a single realm of publicness and openness but more pragmatically as a variety of institutions and formal procedures for precipitating a public sphere. According to theorists such as McCarthy (1992), the boundaries and structures of the places where debates about issues of public concern take place are influenced by history and culture and are therefore fluid. They are negotiated by specific communities according to a set of common needs and values. Some recent articles describing the role of deliberative democracy in managing a range of Canadian-based development projects, while highlighting their successes and failures, suggest a critical role for these public spheres (Richardson et al, 1993; Ali, 1997; Mehta, 1997; McDaniels et al., 1999). Another example of these modern public spheres can be found in the forest resource advisory groups of Alberta. These groups appear to meet some of the basic criteria of a public sphere in that they purport to provide space for a representative sample of citizens to become informed about and debate the veracity of existing forest management practices. In this paper, I undertake an empirically informed normative critique of these forest resource advisory groups as a public sphere. I begin by describing the category of a public sphere in historical context and then I delineate some of the contemporary revisions to Habermas's ideal that, arguably, renders it more flexible in confronting some of the complexities of modern society. I then conduct a critique of forest resource advisory groups in Alberta using interview and survey data. Using the

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normative ideal of public sphere as a standard allows for a focused critique of contemporary public involvement processes. It also provides a basis, borrowing from Dryzek (1995), for uncovering public moments of distorted communication, the causes of such distortion, and the opportunity for social awareness and change. This critique leaves open the possibility of considering forest resource advisory groups to be, on one hand, acting effectively as a public sphere and, on the other hand, acting as a public sphere co-opted by or, to use Habermas's term, feudalized by the private interests of industrial forestry. I conclude with a set of proposals for re-politicizing forest resource advisory groups and for creating space where authentic public debate and social learning can take place on matters of important public interest -- our national forests.

Historical development of the bourgeois public sphere

Since its original German publication in 1962 (1989 English translation), the ideas presented by Habermas in *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* have endured substantial criticism and remains a central theme in the theoretical debates around deliberative democracy (Villa, 1992; Dean, 1996; Torgerson, 1999; Dryzek, 2000; Pellizzoni, 2001). The book outlines the historically unique features of bourgeois public life during 17th and 18th Century Europe. This was a period marked by tremendous social change. Not only were traditional feudal modes of production giving way to early stages of global trade and capitalist accumulation, enlightenment ideals found in authors such as Immanuel Kant (1784) were creating the intellectual space for "men of learning" to challenge the status quo through informed argument. This new found freedom allowed citizens (the reading public) to challenge and to revise forms of social organization ranging from state bureaucracies to religious institutions. The Kantian idea of freedom also formed the basis for Habermas's conception of the public sphere.

In terms of the emergent features of bourgeois society to which Habermas refers, the public sphere takes form with the supporting foundations of a literate public during a unique period of British and, to a lesser extent, European history. One of the most striking features of this historical period was the proliferation of coffee houses serving as conduits for businessmen to discuss matters of common concern or general interest. The

first coffee houses were established in London around 1650. By the 18th Century they had grown in popularity to numbers in excess of 3,000 – all with a core of regulars. Discussions in these establishments were not only far reaching, from state politics to matters of trade, they were illuminated by an increasing circulation of 'news' journals that served to inform a literate public about matters of common concern. At their peak, coffee house patrons would go so far as to compete with each other by making arrangements with publishers to deliver the widest possible selection of intellectual material. In this sense, the bourgeois public sphere was interpreted by Habermas as a sphere of private people who would come together as a public to "engage public authorities over the general rules governing relations in the basically privatized but publicly relevant sphere of commodity exchange and social labor" (Habermas, 1989).

In discussing this phenomenon of informed and public argumentation within this historical period, Habermas used the German word *Öffentlichkeit*. The standard English translation is *public sphere*, which tends to connote a specific place or separate sphere from other social spheres. On one hand, the translation seems to fit nicely with the period of English coffee houses as a distinct locale of public discussion. This implied meaning can be somewhat restrictive, however, in that *Öffentlichkeit* can also be understood as a specific quality or aspect of various social arrangements in the form of "openness" or "public access" (Koivisto and Valiverronen, 1996). For instance, some contemporary social movements or social gatherings may exhibit certain signs or qualities of a public sphere. This subtle distinction will be important later in our discussion of forest resource advisory groups as a public sphere in the contemporary period of organized capitalism.

What are the key elements or features of a public sphere? Calhoun (1992) has summarized these features as follows. First, Habermas refers to a kind of "social intercourse" in the public sphere that disregarded social status altogether or at least treated social status as secondary to a form of trust in the process of argumentation and a shared public concern. In this way, the notion of common interest in truth or right policy supported the "bracketing" of social difference. Second, rational argument was the sole arbiter of any issue. In other words, any form of argument was to be guided by general procedures or what is now commonly called *procedural rationality*. Procedural rationality emerged in later refinements to the concept of a public sphere as a normative

claim regarding the available procedures that facilitate the democratic process. In its extreme form, contemporary theorists refer to Habermas's version of discourse in the public sphere as radically proceduralist. "It views normative dialogue as a conversation of justification taking place under the constraints of an ideal speech situation. The proceduralist constraints of the ideal speech situation are that each participant must have equal chance [to speak]" (Benhabib 1992). Third, the public sphere allowed for the problematization of areas that hitherto had not been subject to critical debate. Issues related to church and state authority were for the first time brought into public discourse as matters of common concern. Goodnight (1992) discusses this element in the context of a public moment, for instance within self-sequestered Eastern European societies of the mid-1900s, that can be facilitated by the show and display of alternatives. These alternatives would not be available for debate in the absence of a public sphere. Sckollerhorn (1998) refers to this aspect of the public sphere in terms of de-constructing barriers to the spread of new conviction. Fourth, for the first time in western history, inclusiveness or at least the potential for inclusion became an established principle. This principle was realized by a reading public with access to books and journals who where willing to engage in public discourse. These features of the public sphere were produced by a unique set of social arrangements and intellectual foment in the early capitalist stages of Europe. While debates have turned on the extent to which Habermas correctly understood the cultural conditions precipitating the 17th Century public sphere, his work is now generally accepted as an attempt to constitute the historical category of public sphere and then draw it as a normative ideal (Calhoun, 1992).

These historical conditions have been generalized by Habermas (1979) to a set of expectations about how people should behave in public communication. As an expression of procedural rationality described earlier, these norms for pragmatic communication are foundational and grounded in common sense. Forester (1985) organizes these norms into the following terms. Members of a deliberative community should be expected to speak *comprehensively, sincerely, legitimately,* and to speak the *truth.* Comprehension refers to the extent to which the listener can understand what is happening around them or to them. Sincerity refers to the general expression of the speaker's intentions whereas truth refers to "the fit or misfit of statements or representations of reality with the reality supposedly

represented" (1985:223). Legitimacy refers to the appropriateness of professionals making certain claims that may or may not be within their realm of professional expertise. Without these norms we have nothing but misunderstanding and mistrust.

As the title suggests (*Structural Transformation*), the normative ideal of a public sphere is only half the story. But because the normative ideal is of primary interest here, I will only briefly describe what Habermas means by the structural transformation of the public sphere. According to Habermas, structural transformation came about through a "refeudalization" of society. In other words, private organizations gained public power on one hand and the state became increasingly influential in areas of family and economy. This refeudalization had a destabilizing and de-politicizing impact on the public sphere by shifting the locus of public discussion from one of general or common interest to interests based on inequality and class division. As a result, the debate shifted from issues of general public concern to negotiation and compromise between interests not shared by society as a whole. The ensuing public sphere became a forum for advertising ideas related to what is now termed "special interest." This form of public debate is likely most familiar to the 21st Century observer but according to Habermas, falls desperately short of the proposed normative ideal.

In his non-feudalized version of the public sphere, Habermas lays out a compelling ideal form for public deliberation and decision making with regard to the affairs of life. Although providing certain universal pragmatics for communication within the public sphere (what was later termed ideal speech acts), Habermas has been criticized by contemporary theorists for failing to identify an institutional basis for an effective public sphere in the organized capitalism of the 21st Century. To this end, several authors have taken Habermas's normative ideals, set in a specific period of early capitalism, and have attempted to revise or advance a set of refinements that are at once more functional in pluralistic contemporary societies and more sensitive to the expanding realm of human concern broadly known as the natural world[2]. It is to these issues that we now turn.

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[2] Another area of concern for public sphere scholars is the potential for distorted communication arising from highly technical or science-based discursive spheres. A series of questions posed by Fischer (1990) identify the problem. "Can democracy work in a complex technological society? How can we begin to lessen the very substantial gap between elite decision-making centres and the generally undifferentiated mass of citizens altogether left out of the process?" Although this paper does not address these questions explicitly, the implication of the analysis would acknowledge the tension between democracy and

Representation in the public sphere

Habermas's conception of the public sphere, as a category of bourgeois public life, is most heavily criticized for its inability to deal equitably with issues of public representation in modern state bureaucracies – states which are characterized by a plurality of competing public interests. In its historical form, Habermas conceptualizes a singular public sphere which is claimed to be *the* public arena where those citizens armed with public knowledge can debate issues of public concern. In this sense, a multiplicity of public fora becomes dysfunctional in that the locus of public discussion tends to shift from issues of public concern to negotiation and compromise between private interests. Within the modern context, however, it is difficult for most theorists to imagine one overarching public sphere as adequate to addressing the concerns of a literate and concerned citizenry. As a normative ideal, anyone with a public concern is free to participate in the public sphere. From a practical point of view, however, the inclusiveness foundations of the public sphere developed by Habermas become problematic in modern literate societies where fundamental value differences are cherished in forms of multi-culturalism and where socio-economic stratification is pronounced (Fraser, 1992). Eckersley (1999) argues that the closest Habermas comes to addressing the question of representation within a single public sphere is *role-playing*. In the context of discursive dialogue, role playing means "anticipating and assuming the position of others in order to test and evaluate the consequences of proposed norms from all conceivable perspectives" (1999:27). Eckersley also points to Goodin (1996) as a defender of this role-playing orientation whereby participants anticipate and address the interests and possible objections of differently situated others as *anticipatory internalization*, or "a strategy that serves to educate and transform the preferences of participants in the deliberative community" Eckersley (1999:27).

Although this emphasis on role-playing may serve to broaden the range of issues and concerns under consideration within a public sphere, the problem of who can speak for whom and under what conditions remains acute. In order to circumvent this problem, Fraser (1992) takes the concept of a modern public sphere away from role-playing to

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technology and suggest that challenges to technical rationality are only achieved within the discursive community where all forms of information (technical, anecdotal, mythical, rhetorical) are contested and

what she calls *subaltern counterpublics*. These are "parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counterdiscourses to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs" (1992:123). In this way, she moves away from the concept of a singular public sphere to one of multiple or parallel public spheres. This position is immediately less elitist in its discounting of role playing or representative thinking by the few who are privileged to participate in the singular public sphere. Yet it does, however, initially lay itself open to Habermas's criticism of multiple public spheres as a sign of refeudalization where public interests are displaced by negotiation and compromise between private interests. Fraser addresses this potential problem in her formulation by re-emphasizing the publicness of these counterpublics. Insofar as these groups are formulated to address issues of public concern and participate in public debate through information dissemination and argumentation, they continue to serve as a public sphere. According to Fraser, subaltern counterpublics have a dual character. "On one hand, they function as spaces of withdrawal and regroupment; on the other, they also function as bases and training grounds for agitational activities directed toward wider publics" (1992:124). Fraser sees the emancipatory potential of these groups precisely between these dual characters in that these counterpublics "serve to offset, although not wholly to eradicate, the unjust participatory privileges enjoyed by members of dominant social groups in stratified societies" (1992:124). Some classical examples of successful counterpublics might include feminists, gays and lesbians, people of colour, and environmental advocates. Fraser also makes a useful distinction between weak and strong publics; weak being those deliberative communities where activities are intended exclusively for opinion formation, and strong being those publics where opinion formation and decision making are undertaken (i.e. legislative assemblies).

With these refinements to the normative ideal of a public sphere, we can begin to imagine an ideal that might be more suitable to a re-constituting of the public sphere in modern society. A modern public sphere would likely not be constrained by one forum for public information and argumentation but more practically contained within a series of parallel public spheres where members of a stratified public can find their place to

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publically scrutinized.

participate and therefore be less encumbered by vast differences in social status or value positions. These counterpublics would of course continue to adhere to the foundational elements of a public sphere provided by Habermas; an attempt to reach mutual understanding based on the force of the better argument. In this sense, these counterpublics may be judged by the degree to which they attain the qualities of publicness or openness (*Offentlichkeit)* required to engage in ideal speech acts. Toward this end, parallel public spheres may engage, to some extent, in role-playing where the perspectives of those not present in the deliberative community are brought to bear in the discourse. They may also seek to engage other deliberative communities or counterpublics in their attempts to become more inclusive in their understanding of public concerns and to achieve consensus through mutual learning. With this modern ideal of a public sphere in mind, we can appreciate Geoff Eley's re-definition of a public sphere as "the structured setting where cultural and ideological contest or negotiation among a variety of publics takes place" (Eley, 1992). The structure then is what Habermas identifies as the norms of communication within a public sphere.

Greening Discourse Ethics

Critical theorists have traditionally considered nature as subordinate and dominated by technical rationality. The main theme of Horkheimer and Adorno's work in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1972) was that science has a tendency to dominate the natural world in ways that are practically unavoidable. These negative views of progress are challenged by Habermas in his theory of communicative action where he attempts to document instances of incremental change in defiance of the categorical imperatives of high-tech or science-based capitalism (Agger, 1985). According to Habermas, these attempts to affect change take place within a public sphere where human agents are equipped with knowledge and are free to discuss alternatives to solutions derived merely from technical rationality. Within this concept of human agency, again, Habermas is positioned for criticism by allowing only those who are capable of communication (agents who possess language) to participate in the deliberative community. His position is also biased toward those with greater rhetorical skills. This anthropocentric position is not necessarily problematic in that human agents could, through their reflexive capacity, act as agents on

behalf of the nonhuman community. But of course this outcome is not guaranteed and one could imagine a scenario where human interests would take precedence over nonhuman entities, especially those with no immediate human value.

This problem of humans as representative of the nonhuman world turns on a theory that is grounded in human speech acts and an ontological dualism where a sharp distinction is made between human and nonhuman worlds. One step in breaking down this problematic dualism is to posit that nature is essentially a human construct. It is human in that nature has been influenced and even constructed by human history and culture to the extent that the natural world is conceived in very different ways. This breaking down of nature as a distinctive and autonomous realm is not unique to critical theory. Recent contributions from historians and philosophers (Cronon, 1996) have served to break apart this dualism and critique the idea of nature as a distinctive ontological category.

Vogel brings these arguments into Habermas's theory of the public sphere in some persuasive ways. He argues that the social construction of nature "emphasizes the way in which the environment that surrounds us and that we take for granted as 'natural' turns out, on investigation, to be the product of human labour and hence literally socially constructed" (1996:6). If we agree that in this sense the natural world is indistinguishable from the human world, then a critical theory of the public sphere is capable of considerable import because of the sociality of nature. As a result, this theory rejects what is known as the naturalistic argument.

> Such a naturalism thinks it can resolve what are fundamentally social questions - about the sorts of practices we as a society ought to be engaging in, the sort of world we ought to inhabit, the sorts of people we want to be - by appealing to 'what nature demands' of us or to the dangers of a dominated but powerful nature that might 'take its revenge' on us (Vogel 1996:9).

These arguments, according to Vogel, serve only to short-circuit the democratic process by labeling certain elements of our social world as 'natural' and therefore non-negotiable when in fact they simply reflect a limited set of normative claims about how the world should be. From the point of view of the public sphere, to ground normative claims outside the realm of the discursive community is to isolate these claims from discursive scrutiny. In the end, Vogel argues that to say nature is socially constructed is to make

human agents morally responsible. "It is this recognition of our inextricable connection to and responsibility for the world we inhabit, it seems to me, that the source of a morally justifiable 'environmental ethic' is to be found" (1996:10).

Although the approach taken by Vogel goes some distance in providing discursive space for the concerns of nature in the public sphere, it remains explicitly anthropocentric in orientation. Humans remain the sole agents of moral argumentation and normative claims making, and as a result, ecocentric theorists argue the inadequacy of this position. With the increasingly troubling issues of global warming and biodiversity in mind, ecocentric observers take issue with Vogel's cavalier claims about nature's inability to take revenge on the human world. Humans may simply be reaping the consequences of poor management but from an ecocentric point of view, humans act on nature as one of many human and nonhuman agents of change. In this sense, there exists an essential human embeddedness in nature, which dictates an interconnectedness and an interdependence that is absent from the anthropocentric view. Unlike the anthropocentric view, which has been likened to technocentrism whereby nature is predominantly controlled and consumed, ecocentrism places the health and functioning of the ecosystem at centre stage with no fundamental differences between human and non-human things (Smith, 1998). Furthermore, from an anthropocentric view, humans are singled out for their communicative excellence. But Eckersley suggests that such a perspective is tantamount to human chauvinism. "To single out our particular forms of excellence as the basis of our exclusive moral considerability is simply human chauvinism that fails to recognize the particular forms of excellence of other life-forms" (1990:750). Eckersley then extends this argument to the public sphere in defense of nonhumans as communicatively competent – albeit in different ways than humans. If one of the pillars of the public sphere is the notion of representative thinking or role playing, one would expect human agents who are able to communicate through language, to act as representatives of others who are unable to do so. This *other-regarding* then may also be extended to the nonhuman community. Ecocentric theorists argue that "it is enough that a being is a centre of agency, however rudimentary, with its own life and special mode of flourishing for it to be recognized as a morally considerable being, deserving of recognition and consideration in human deliberation" (Eckersley, 1999:42). Some critics

remain uncomfortable, however, with the unidirectional or elementary nature of our communication with nature. Surely in these instances a discourse or an interaction with nature is not possible. We can interpret signals from nature but nature is not able to challenge these interpretations. To this concern, Dryzek (2000) emphasizes the notion of effective listening as central to the public sphere. In many instances, humans are not able to challenge our interpretations of their needs. Nonetheless we attempt to do this by careful listening, by attempting to understand their needs and by communicating those needs to others. Finally, much like Smith's (1998) call to ecological citizenship, Dryzek argues the most effective means of promoting an ecologically sensitive democracy would be to stop thinking of our ourselves as simply social beings and start thinking of ourselves as ecological beings.

With these extensions of the public sphere - the anthropocentric view which apprehends nature as a social construction, and the ecocentric view which demands a place for nonhuman agents in the public sphere - Habermas's original conception of the public sphere has been modernized to suit the expanding concerns of contemporary society. To a degree, the demand for the inclusion of the nonhuman other remains problematic when one considers *who* should speak for these nonhumans and the proliferation of life forms entitled to consideration. Vogel also reminds us that *how* nature is represented, through naturalistic claims or discursive-based claims, remains an important consideration. Regardless of these difficulties, the normative claim for the inclusion of the natural world is established by these authors and is most closely represented in the field of environmental sociology as the new ecological paradigm (Dunlap and Catton, 1994).

Alberta forest resource advisory groups as a public sphere

We now turn our attention to a specific example where a public sphere is being forged in the contemporary context of organized capitalism. Forest resource advisory groups in Alberta are a relatively new phenomenon, yet they provide an interesting example of the complexity involved in public sphere formation in the modern state. Part of this complexity is the new science of forest management. Highly technical management tools such as models that emulate natural disturbances are being developed by joint ventures

between multi-national forest companies and university departments. An example of this type of cooperation is the Sustainable Forest Management Network at the University of Alberta. In the face of this highly science-based decision-making apparatus, however, Canadians continue to be concerned about the sustainability of their forests. They are increasingly critical of management practices that are "seen as out-of-step with their own values that place environment over jobs" (Natural Resources Canada, 1997). In order to understand this lingering public dissatisfaction with modern forest management practices, it is useful to reflect briefly on the 20th century back-to-nature discourse. A social constructionist view of nature emphasizes the historical transformation away from an ideology of nature as a resource for capitalist development, toward an ideology emphasizing the aesthetic and nonfunctional values of nature (Hannigan 1995). Byproducts of this wilderness-as-a-resource perspective are national parks, special places initiatives, biosphere reserves, and a desire on the part of civil society to reorient our forest management infrastructure toward more ecocentric values. Sensing this disconnection between public opinion and existing forest management practices, national and provincial-level governments have emphasized and legislated public involvement as a key component to effective forest management decision making. In Alberta, the primary mechanism for ongoing public involvement in forest management is approximately 14 forest company-sponsored public advisory groups (PAGs) which are composed of 10 to 15 members of the general public and organized by the company to provide regular comment on local forest management plans and to address issues of concern to the general public. Public interests or concerns are transmitted by these groups in several ways. One mechanism would include forwarding local concerns to the PAG through a constituent representative. In one recent example, the local environmental organization forwarded concerns about the company's stated goals in their sustainable forest management plan through their PAG representative. These concerns were then considered by PAG members. In some instances, a vote is taken to either adopt or reject these concerns as a group or to seek additional information before making a decision. In the end, if a PAG makes a recommendation to the company, the company retains the right to either accept or reject the recommendation. In other words, these groups have no decision making authority. Other ways of providing regular public comment relate to

group learning about issues of common concern. For instance, PAG members may not have a specific concern but they may be interested in issues such as road access management or cumulative effects. These group interests then set the stage for guest speakers and other information gathering activities. These learning activities have a collective impact on PAG members as well as company representatives. The first PAG in Alberta was formed in 1989, but the majority of these groups have been in existence for less than five years. In most instances, the company seeks broad-based representation from the local community to initiate the group and then involves the group in developing terms of reference for subsequent additions or terminations of group membership. Members typically include representatives from the local labour union, educational, medical, and religious institutions, recreation clubs, business community, and Aboriginal and environmental organizations. Members are not paid for their time but meals are often provided by the company. Typically those who do participate have the time, the intellectual curiosity or concern for forest management activities in their region, and the support of a constituent group to act as their representative. In the remainder of this paper, I will use personal observation, interview, and survey data to further describe and explore the extent to which PAGs achieve the category of a public sphere with specific attention to issues of representation and the inclusion of nonhuman or ecological concerns in advisory group discourse.

How do they measure up?

Can PAGs be described as a public sphere or at least possessing certain qualities that might approximate the historical category of a public sphere? In order to address this question, we can refer back to the fundamentals of the public sphere outlined by Calhoun (1992). In brief, these include (1) a general disregard for social status, (2) truth claims founded solely on the force of the better argument, (3) allowance for the problematization of issues that might otherwise go undebated, and (4) the inclusion of all who are equipped (literacy and knowledge) and are willing to participate in the deliberative community[3]. I

[3]In holding up advisory groups to these normative ideals, it is important to appreciate the extent of organizational diversity across these 12 advisory groups province wide. Each has its own history, membership, institutional constraints, and range of issues under consideration. With the survey data available for this paper, conclusions about the advisory groups province-wide are drawn from the 71

will argue that minimally, PAGs do qualify as a public sphere for the following reasons. First, PAGs are formed with the expressed intent of providing informed input into forest management plans[4]. Second, this input is to come from a diversity of local residents who are either directly or indirectly affected by forest management plans. For one advisory group, this diversity includes representatives from local government, other local industries, forest users (i.e. trappers), clergy, physicians, Aboriginals, forestry workers, and a number of representatives from technical schools and universities. These representatives do not have decision making authority, but they are intended to provide a reality check on forest management plans by isolating existing or potential issues of concern to the general public and discussing possible solutions with the use of best-available data. Third, through constituent representation, PAGs are open to all members of the local public who may have an interest or concern about forest management. In principle, these objectives loosely match the criteria defined by Calhoun, although as the following discussion demonstrates, the current functioning of PAGs show areas of significant weakness in their approximation to the category of a public sphere.

Representation in public advisory groups

In the previous discussion, we note that representation has been identified as an area of theoretical weakness in Habermas's conception of the public sphere. This stems largely from the demands for an expansion of the public sphere in the modern state. In this section, I will show that, by some specific objective measures, representation of the Alberta public within PAG membership is also weak. These measures are taken from survey research conducted in 1999 with 1000 Alberta residents and 158 PAG members. The Alberta sample was obtained by random selection of telephone numbers with follow-up procedures resulting in a 66% response rate. A complete list of 158 PAG members was obtained and distributed via group chairpersons. There was no opportunity for follow-up contact with individual members, resulting in a response rate of 45%. For a complete description of methods and descriptive statistics, refer to Parkins et al. (2001).

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members who participated in the mail survey. Some additional interview and observational data is available from several advisory groups throughout the province.

Survey results indicate that, based on some basic socio-demographic data, PAG members are not representative of the general public (Table B.1). Public advisory groups and the general public have similar mean ages but PAG members are significantly more male, more educated and more wealthy than are the general public. Results from a second survey examining differences in forest values and attitudes between the Alberta public and PAGs also show significant variation in value orientations (McFarlane and Boxall 2001). For instance, in response to the statement 'there is sufficient wood to meet our present and future needs,' 63% of PAG members agreed while only 23% of the public agreed. Similarly, in response to the statement 'logging causes few long-term negative effects,' 52% of PAG members agreed while only 16% of the public agreed. These findings suggest that on average, PAG members tend to misrepresent the general public in Alberta; specifically in socio-demographic characteristics and in forest value and attitude orientation.

Table B.1. Socio-demographic characteristics of survey samples

Characteristics	Alberta public	PAG Members
Mean age	45.6	48.0
Women (%)	51.4	16.9
Post-secondary education (%)	65.7	84.0
Household income ≥$70, 000 (%)	30.6	49.3

PAG = Public advisory group.

In defense of this apparent failure to achieve a representative sample of Alberta residents in the membership of these advisory groups, it is possible that PAG members are engaged in role-playing and, in doing so, may anticipate and assume the position of others in an attempt to imagine a broader possible range of perspectives on a given issue. A set of survey questions provide some support for this position. First PAG members were asked 'whose views were you selected to represent'. In response, 23% of members indicated 'the public at large' whereas 71% indicated 'a specific stakeholder group'. Second, members were asked, now that you are a PAG member 'which group(s) do you

[4]Forest management in this context is defined broadly as management over logging, silviculture, road construction, all forest-based recreational activities such as camping and hunting, and a range of ecological concerns such as grizzly bear and caribou habitat.

seek to represent'. This time, 43% indicated 'the public at large' and 50% indicated 'a specific stakeholder group'. These findings show more than 20% of respondents switching from representing a specific stakeholder group to representing the public at large -- a finding that seems to support the idea of role-playing by PAG members. In other words, PAG members may anticipate or assume the position of others within their community even when their personal values may dictate a different position. The possibility of role-playing is also supported by data showing the range of information sources being accessed about forest management in Alberta.

It becomes immediately clear from Figure B.1 that a large proportion of PAG members are accessing information from a wide range of sources. Forest industries are the most frequent source but forest visits (first-hand experience), research scientists, government agencies, and environmental organizations are sources of information for at least 50% of PAG respondents. Access to, and the inclusion of, these sources and the ideas contained within them appear to be crucial to the maintenance of PAGs as a public sphere.

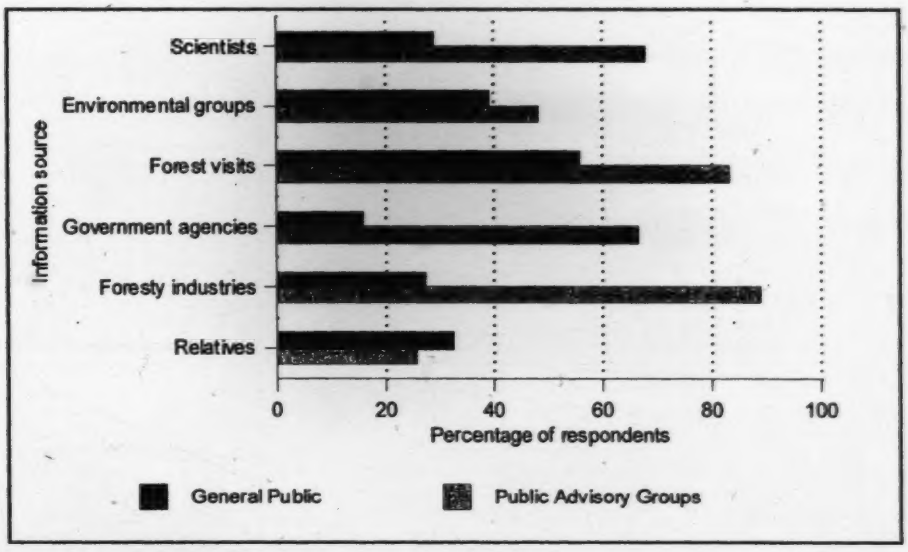

Figure B.1. Information sources for PAG members.

Support for the "representative thinking" argument is also supported by survey data showing the percentage of respondents who took action to express views or to gain information about forest management (Figure B.2). Public advisory group members were found to be much more active than urban or rural residents in a range of activities such as donating money to environmental and conservation groups, joining environmental organizations, and writing letters to government agencies. These findings lend support to the notion that PAG members, although not necessarily representative of the broader public in socio-economic characteristics, may in fact be engaged in a process of other-regarding. Consistent with the 17th Century public sphere, described by Habermas, access to intellectual material was essential to an informed, rational argument, and to identifying problems that might otherwise go undebated. Furthermore, these intellectual materials may serve to stimulate the type of role-playing that theorists such as Eckersley (1999) suggest are crucial to the functioning of a public sphere in modern society.

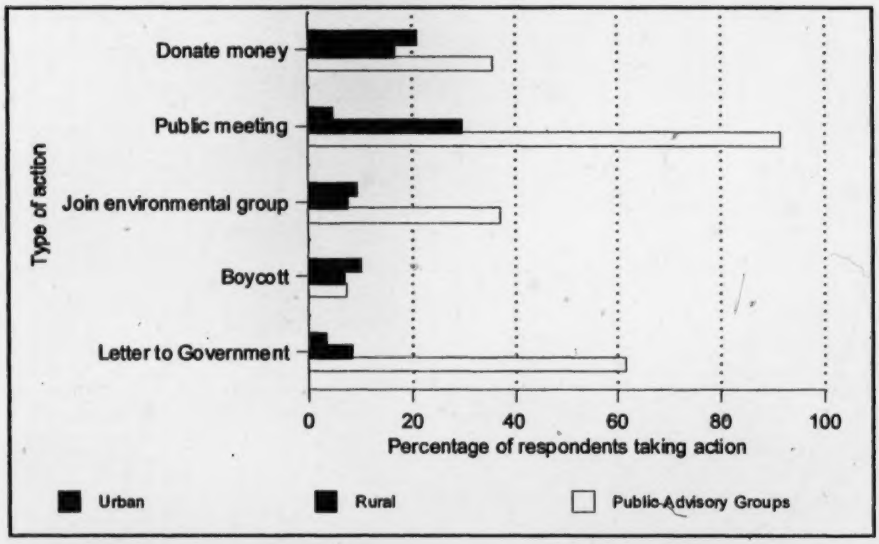

Figure B.2. Percentage of respondents who take action to express views or gain information about forest management. Urban = Edmonton and Calgary, Rural = all other smaller urban and non-urban locales.

Advisory groups as counter publics or feudalized publics

A counter argument to the consideration of forest resource advisory groups as a role-playing public sphere may be to imagine them (to use Fraser's term), as subaltern

counterpublics. Using much of the same data presented in the previous section regarding the mismatch between public values and PAG values regarding forest management, one could argue that in fact, PAGs can be more accurately understood as a closely controlled groups of citizens who are educated selectively about the operations of the forest company in such a way as to render them effective in communicating company achievements. The most convincing data for this claim comes from the survey conducted by McFarlane and Boxall (2001) where the general views of PAG members were regularly aligned with those of Registered Professional Foresters (RPFs).

Registered Professional Foresters are employed by government and forest companies to manage the forest land base. They are commonly in a position to organize PAG meetings and act as brokers of information provided to PAGs. In this sense then, PAGs may, over time, begin to operate as a sophisticated communication mechanism for forest companies -- a mechanism that can be viewed as a counterpublic in the sense that PAGs become parallel deliberative communities to environmental organizations, Aboriginal groups, or academic communities that are often critical of the existing forest management regime. Public advisory groups may also be thought of as rural or local counterpublics parallel to the urban or non-local public.

Public advisory groups as a counterpublic tends to break down, however, when considered in the context of the PAG mandate to be a representative group of local residents. According to Fraser's definition of a counterpublic that is engaging in public life via communication with parallel publics, the notion of constituent representation and a diversity of public perspectives within one counterpublic becomes counterintuitive. Fraser also defines counterpublics as a training ground for agitational activities. This dimension seems to be missing from PAGs who are largely a collection of local organizational and institutional representatives. In the end, one might argue that PAGs represent a feudalized version of a public sphere. They are not referred to as *refeudalized* here because they were likely never completely untethered from private (corporate) interest, and although perhaps initially constituted by a diversity of public members, they may quickly become agents of private interest; a private interest that restricts debate and packages information in support of a private agenda. For example, PAG members may push companies to think about road access or cumulative effects management but they

often remain dependent on the company to identify experts and information relevant to the issue. The values orientation depicted in Figure B.3 is suggestive of this restricted range of access to information. As a result, PAGs may not represent a place where people initiate incremental change in defiance of the categorical imperatives of high-tech capitalism. Rather, they may be a place that confirms or endorses these imperatives and disseminates them to the broader public.

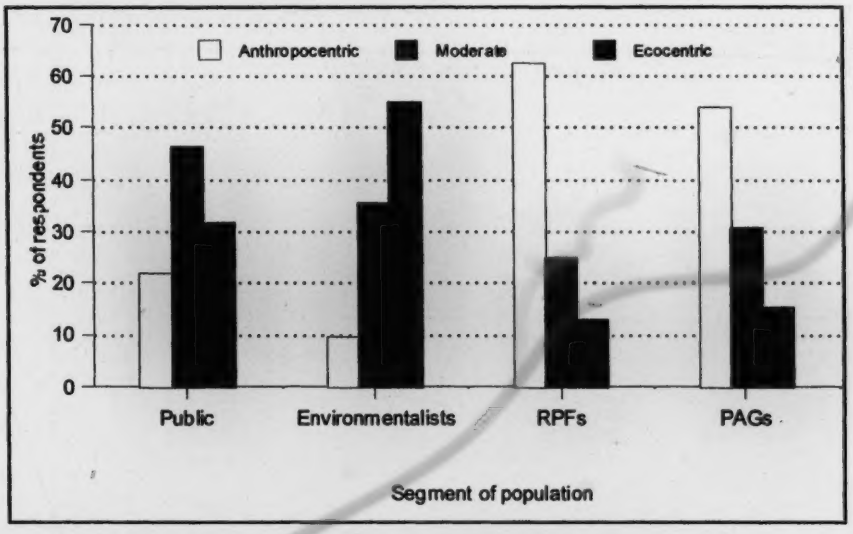

Figure B.3. Distribution of forest value segments among stakeholder groups. RPF = registered professional forester, PAGs = public advisory groups.

An example of PAGs as a feudalized public sphere comes from the attempts by some environmental organizations to use PAGs as a deliberative community where ecocentric arguments can be tabled for discussion and debate. In the ideal form, a public sphere would provide the opportunity for this debate to occur and, by force of the better argument, take positions that might be in conflict with existing ways of knowing or understanding the world. In contrast to this ideal, a number of environmental advocates refuse to participate in PAG deliberations citing unwillingness to listen and restricted agendas as barriers to *Öffentlichkeit* (openness and publicness). Some of this apparent unwillingness to include and carefully listen to arguments can be understood in terms of forest worker perceptions of the environmentalist community. Dunk (1994) suggests these relationships are governed by metaphoric and metonymic dimensions where being

an environmentalist often means being a city-dweller, middle-class, abstract, and perhaps ignorant. These stereotypes then may form the basis for exclusion from the local public sphere. As a result, barriers within PAGs and other so-called multi-stakeholder processes have provoked environmentalists to take their arguments to a public arena where procedural rationality is more firmly entrenched – namely the courts. Countless examples of court cases where environmental advocates have forced corporations and municipalities to rethink the ways industrial activity is conducted or to halt development altogether speak to the lack of public fora within the modern state to hold these debates and to achieve consensus based on the force of the better argument. Public advisory groups have the potential to provide this role but the extent to which ecocentric views, or dissenting views in general, are restricted from the discourse speaks to the feudalization of this public sphere.

Conclusion

Habermas provides a rich theoretical context in which to differentiate between positive and negative moments of public development (Goodnight 1992). These public moments can be contrasted with private moments where the dictates of scientific rationality permeate the decision-making process. These private moments foster a modernity that is on one hand highly progressive and creative and on the other hand concerned with private interest, personal gain, and the narrowing of public options to those in support of private interest. Habermas identifies a period in history, a critical period between feudal societies and capitalists states, where a vibrant public sphere provided the opportunity for private citizens to debate and influence issues of public concern. The foundational elements of this public sphere provide the material for a normative ideal to critique modern public spheres. One of the challenges for theorists in conducting this critique is to propose credible alternative strategies for organizing a modern public sphere that might coincide more closely to the ideals defined by Habermas and other contemporary theorists. This study argues that public advisory groups within the forest industry of Alberta go some distance in achieving the category of a public sphere. Advisory groups seek local representation, they appear to access a wide range of intellectual material, and they appear to engage in role playing. In other aspects, however,

these advisory groups fail to achieve the ideals of a public sphere. Most critically, PAGs are sponsored by private interests in the form of a forest company. Company representatives are often the gatekeepers of information provided within formal group meetings and they appear to maintain a degree of control over who can supply knowledge to group deliberations and what range of forest management alternatives are given access and legitimacy within the discursive arena. These procedural limits are manifest in some members of society and some dominate perspectives on forest management being, if not eliminated from the deliberation, at least frustrated in their ability to argue their position. First Nations and environmental advocates are prime examples.

Advisory groups can move closer to the norms of a public sphere in a number of ways. Forester (1985:219) provides an extensive list of recommendations for enhancing deliberative process in public planning. These include: supplying technical and political information to citizens that will enable more effective participation, encouraging community-based groups to press for full disclosure of project plans, and encouraging independent project reviews and investigations. Public advisory groups can benefit from many of these recommendations as well. First, by creating some distance between the group and the company, PAGs can achieve some autonomy in setting the procedures for deliberation over forest management issues. This would include autonomy over what kinds of issues are discussed and how and where technical information is accessed. Second, citizens or counterpublics who are unwilling to participate in regular deliberations may be willing to provide information or technical presentations to the group. This may enhance the group's ability to engage in representative thinking on behalf of those counterpublics. Third, the membership of these groups may be expanded to include a wider range of interests. If this is impractical, then a rotation of public representatives instead of static membership may be more appropriate for achieving the inclusiveness that is so crucial to a public sphere.

Forest resource advisory groups have become a primary mode of public participation in forest management decision making. These groups have provided the space for private citizens to debate issues of public concern in forest management, but for many within society, they have not played that role. At best, these groups may be described as a public sphere engaged in role-playing activities to compensate for

inadequate representation within their deliberative communities. At worst, they may be described as feudalized public spheres, acting out the consultative requirements of corporate interest and ill-equipped to debate the substantial social and scientific concerns about how Canada's forests are being managed and for whom they benefit.

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Appendix C

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AS PUBLIC DEBATE: A DELIBERATIVE TURN IN NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT[1]

(With Ross E. Mitchell)

Introduction

Scholarly and applied interest in public participation and natural resource management has proliferated in recent years. This has paralleled a broader wave of interest in situations where citizens come together and communicate with each other about matters of public concern. Fueled by increasing scientific complexity and uncertainty, along with a lack of social consensus about how natural resources should be managed, demand for, and academic interest, in public participation appears to be relentless. Writers have theorized and studied how 'deliberative spaces' (sites where meaningful public dialogue and debate can occur) have emerged and how they play a crucial role in generating ideas and information that can improve knowledge, understanding, and enhance the quality of decisions. Writers have also examined the ways in which these deliberative spaces become systematically distorted through manipulation, coercion, and misinformation. One important source of scholarly work in this vein has emerged from critical theory, or more specifically, the 'applied turn' in critical theory (Forester 1985; Morrow 1994). This particular stream of critical theory, attributed generally to Habermas (1964; 1989), focuses considerable attention on the social and cultural functions that are served by these deliberative spaces. Within this theoretical tradition, deliberative spaces (otherwise referred to as discursive environments or components of the public sphere) are considered to be an ideal kind of social environment; namely, one where citizens can discuss and debate common concerns, access a wide range of information, and reflect and revise their understanding of issues.

As an extension of this scholarly tradition in critical theory, deliberative democratic theorists have incorporated these ideas into the political sciences. The 'deliberative turn' in democratic theory is based on criticisms of more episodic forms of

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[1] A version of this appendix has been submitted for publication. Parkins J.R. and R.E. Mitchell. Society and Natural Resources.

democratic participation, where involvement is limited to voting and where public deliberation is severely limited to issue 'sound bites' and popularity contests. In contrast, deliberative democracy is concerned with "debate and discussion aimed at producing reasonable, well-informed opinion in which participants are willing to revise preferences in light of discussion, new information, and claims made by fellow participants" (Chambers 2003, 309). Since the early 1990s, deliberative democratic theory has flourished into an influential body of work. Key contributions to the literature are contained in several volumes (Dryzek 1990; Calhoun 1992; Benhabib 1996; Chambers 1996; Bohman and Rehg 1997; Elster 1998; Dryzek 2000). Major sub-themes within deliberative democratic theory can also be found in many books and journals. For example, a great deal of recent work addresses the difficult relationship between an increasing diversity of public values and the appropriate design of institutions for public deliberation (Phillips 1995; Bohman 1996; Williams 1998; Young 2000). Also, difficulties associated with the language-based orientation of public deliberation and the challenges of including 'voices' from the natural world are actively discussed within the literature (Vogel 1996; Skollerhorn 1998; Eckersley 1999; Torgerson 1999; Dryzek 2000).

In spite of this substantial theoretical and empirical work, a striking feature of the natural resource literature is a general lack of reference to deliberative democratic theory (for exceptions, see Tuler and Webler 1999; Smith and McDonough 2001). This paper seeks to remedy this disconnect by first providing a general introduction to deliberative democratic theory, and second, by comparing deliberative democratic and natural resource perspectives on public participation. We discuss and draw out key distinctions among three major dimensions of public deliberation that are shared by these literatures, and draw out what appear to be some important distinctions. The first dimension deals with an emphasis on discussion and debate (process) within deliberative democratic theory, and an emphasis on outcomes (results and decisions) within the natural resource literature. The second dimension addresses the issue of representation and forms of exclusion that are often under-examined in the natural resource literature. The third dimension explores the issue of institutional versus interpersonal forms of trust. We conclude that, as a theoretical and an applied frame of reference, deliberative democracy

can provide important insights and conceptual tools for practitioners and researchers who are concerned about improving the quality of public participation in natural resource management.

Deliberation and decision making

Deliberative democrats and natural resource sociologists are both intensely interested in decisions that result from public participation. In the natural resource literature, we observe a persistent orientation toward improvements to decisions as a key facet of deliberative processes. Satisfaction with the deliberative process appears to increase when deliberations and outcomes are clearly linked (Shindler and Neburka 1997; Smith and McDonough 2001; McCool and Guthrie 2001). This emphasis on decision making is consistent with 'ladder approaches' to public participation, where 'higher rung' participatory processes, characterized by collaboration or co-management, are clearly preferred over 'lower rung' processes, characterized by placation or information sharing (Arnstein 1969). Throughout the natural resource literature, this emphasis on shared decision-making and shared control forms the basis for empowerment and local control (Knopp and Calbeck 1990; Gray et al. 2001).

Moreover, the emphasis on outcomes in the natural resources literature functions on a logic that understands *public participation as a procedure to improve decision-making*. Within a historical context, these procedures associated with resource management decision-making have gone through several phases. The pre-WWII period was marked by a high degree of optimism about scientific expertise and the merits of technology that would eventually lead to improvements in efficiency, environmental quality, and quality of life. This positivist orientation to decision making had no use for lay involvement, since such activities were viewed as unnecessary roadblocks to technological progress. During the post-WWII period, enthusiasm for lay involvement in decision-making began to gain some momentum, hitting a feverish pitch with the expansion of the environmental movement of the 1960s and 1970s. This movement tapped into growing popular concern for human and industrial expansion into the North American heartland. The social consensus regarding natural resource use began to disintegrate in the face of more diverse and often conflicting public values. In turn,

resource managers scrambled to respond to a growing public appetite for access to decision making processes through high profile events such as the MacKenzie Valley Pipeline Inquiry in northern Canada during the mid-1970s (Berger 1977). These extensive public engagement processes were designed to bring large numbers of people directly into the decision making process. In spite of these major gains in public deliberation, many resource management initiatives continued to be treated as elaborate tools for public communication; in other words, public participation as a surrogate for public education (Bolle 1971). It was felt that the public only needed to be made aware of why managers were making their decisions, and then they would be more accepting of them.

In recent years, scholars have again pushed our understanding of the value of local (and traditional) knowledge and citizen science (Lee 1993; Fischer 2000). They have helped us to more critically examine scientific and technical information, and to value knowledge from local or 'non-expert' sources that are needed to make better decisions. Reflecting this growing appetite for local knowledge, several market-driven governance systems have positioned public participation activities at the center of their decision-making processes. Forest certification initiatives such as the Forest Stewardship Council and the Canadian Standards Association provide a case in point. These processes have developed quite elaborate mechanisms for ongoing dialogue between laypeople, research managers, and the scientific community (Auld and Bull 2003).

In echoing some of this history, Lawrence et al. (1997) state "the overwhelming emphasis in the natural resource literature has been on improving outcomes as the conceptual basis for public involvement…the literature and practice have been primarily concerned with the effects of [public] involvement on decisions." Some natural resource scholars have focused on deliberative processes (Daniels and Walker 2001; Lawrence et al. 1997) but this analysis remains somewhat detached from deliberative democratic theory. The literature here is primarily focused on multi-stakeholder involvement, where optimal solutions are derived from extensive discussion and debate that favors some form of consensus decision making. Optimal decisions are therefore understood in the context of balancing competing interests where all parties who are engaged in the process have a fair chance of influencing the final outcome.

Procedures that improve decision-making are also key issues in deliberative democratic theory. There is recognition that the public will not maintain an active interest without hope of influencing a decision or changing a situation. Such expectations may be aided by fair and consistent procedures that can be agreed upon by group members. For instance, in defining the important elements of a deliberative space, Dryzek (1990) suggests that those involved should identify some sort of decision-making procedure, and this procedure should be oriented around consensus formation. The general emphasis in deliberative democratic theory, however, is not on the outcomes of deliberation but instead on the deliberation itself. Rather than public participation to improve decision-making, deliberative democratic theory functions on a logic that understands *public participation as an opportunity for public debate, personal reflection, and informed public opinion.* Although largely untapped by the natural resource literature, these ideas around public debate and public opinion formation appear highly relevant within the natural resource management context where issues are often highly complex and deeply contested.

To understand the basis of this interest in public engagement and debate requires a brief return to the historical and theoretical origins of the public sphere. As a historical ideal, the public sphere has come to be understood as a place where private citizens meet together in public ways to discuss, debate, and challenge the rules and norms that govern society (Calhoun 1992). Through the generation of knowledge and its influence on public opinion, the 17th century European public sphere challenged the authority of church and state in new, provocative ways. The powers of the day were not particularly keen on these new populist sources of knowledge and influence. Still, they provided places for citizens to serve as a counterweight to governing institutions through forms of influence that were until then undeveloped.

Emerging from this historical precedent, some deliberative democrats make a distinction between 'strong' and 'weak' public spheres. Strong public spheres are characterized by public deliberation and decision-making authority, such as legislative and parliamentary institutions – institutions that set policy and make laws. Weak public spheres, on the other hand, are much more ubiquitous and also more amorphous networks and coalitions that form around issues of public concern, and are characterized by

deliberation without decision-making authority (Fraser 1990). Unlike the ladder approach to public participation, deliberative democrats value those forms of deliberation that are not directly linked to decision-making procedures. The value of a weak public sphere is tied to the quality of public deliberation and the potential for public deliberation to inform and influence both decision makers and the general public.

In this context, deliberative democratic theory is concerned with the cultivation and the maintenance of productive deliberative spaces. In an ideal world, these deliberative spaces would function under conditions that allow for free-flowing dialogue aimed at producing reasonable and well-informed opinions. Instead of focusing on specific decision-making procedures, deliberative democrats are interested in deliberative spaces where the primary emphasis is "understanding between individuals rather than success in achieving predefined individual goals" (Dryzek 1990, 22). This literature often refers to notions of "free and public reasoning among equals" (Cohen 1996, 99), or "communication that induces reflection upon preferences in a non-coercive fashion" (Dryzek 2000, 2). Furthermore, one of the overarching goals for deliberative democratic theory is to establish the conditions under which private values and private opinions can be transformed into (or at least, made to appreciate) public values and public opinions.

This expanded interest in public deliberation has implications for how public participation activities are empirically examined within the natural resource sector. With an interest in promoting or expanding available opportunities for public deliberation, researchers may study those factors that fuel public discussion and debate. Such factors are likely to include basic considerations such as the quality of representation, the quality of information available to those involved, and the formal procedures under which deliberation takes place. Empirical work may also include a more extended investigation of the public sphere involving nodes of public discussion and debate (i.e. government, scientific community, environmental groups, outdoor recreation organizations). Another approach may include an analysis of how these deliberative spaces are linked to public opinion, and the ways in which messages are transmitted horizontally and vertically within the public sphere.

Representation and inclusion

The issue of representation is central to both natural resource and deliberative democratic views of public participation. Natural resource scholars and practitioners who are interested in public engagement often refer to concepts such as representation, participation, or involvement, whereas deliberative democratic theorists often use the term inclusion. These terms may have overlapping meanings, depending on the circumstance, but some distinct differences remain. The natural resource approach to representation can be characterized in several ways. First, the natural resource literature is concerned with several practical issues, not the least of which is the practical matter of getting people to the table, or hoping that enough of the expected stakeholders show up. The fear is that inadequate representation of the given population could weaken the process. For example, in a participatory process of public land decision-making, the authors ask, "do the participants represent all significant sectors of the community?" (Carr and Halvorsen 2001, 110). In addition, scholars have addressed issues of local versus non-local participation, lay versus expert participation, and diffuse versus concentrated interests (Mascarenhas and Scarce 2004; Overdevest 2000). Second, certain tools used to enhance participatory processes in natural resource management may not contain deliberative components. Some methods of participation may attempt to be inclusive, yet do not allow for public discussion and debate. Mail surveys are a prime example. Similarly, open houses provide some opportunities for critical dialogue, but the quality of deliberations is often constrained by a lack of flexibility and a lack of public representation (Beckley 1999). Third, the concept of representation in the natural resource literature is often limited to a reduced set of interests, usually comprised of those with both a stake in and knowledge of natural resource management (e.g., Hull et al. 2001). Those involved tend to be male citizens with above average education and incomes (McComas 2001; McFarlane and Boxall 2002), and often with previous forest-related training (Jabbour and Balsillie 2003).

On this last point, representation in the natural resource literature is more commonly limited to those deemed to be stakeholders (e.g., Knopp and Caldbeck 1990; Grimble and Chan 1995; Martin et al. 2000; Hull et al. 2001; Leach 2002; Ravnborg and Westermann 2002). In the broader sense, stakeholders are "all those who affect, and/or

are affected by, the policies, decisions and actions of the system; they can be individuals, communities, social groups, or institutions of any size, aggregation or level in society" (Grimble and Chan 1995, 114). Resource managers often consider stakeholders as partners in a collaborative process, or as "people whose personal or professional welfare depends substantially upon the outcomes of [a given] partnership" (Leach 2002, 642). Participants may be selected because their opinions are deemed relevant to local decision making. Hence, they are influential in local planning and decision-making processes, but "may not be statistically representative of the larger community" (Hull et al. 2001, 329).

Much like the authors above, deliberative democratic theorists have made a conscious effort to deal with the question of representation as a principal area of scholarly inquiry. Some authors maintain that a critical test to deliberative democracy in contemporary society is the profound and inescapable challenge of cultural pluralism (Pateman 1970; Walzer 1983; Williams 1998; Mouffe 2000; Young 2000). Akin to the natural resource literature, this work is focused on capturing the growing diversity of public values within a deliberative process. At this juncture, however, deliberative democratic theory takes on some additional challenges.

In response to feminist criticisms of deliberative democratic theory, scholars have focused a great deal of attention on what it means to be a representative – to be actively included within a deliberative process. Ideally, all concerned citizens would have opportunities to participate in setting environmental policy by joining the efforts of scientists, technicians, and government officials within a deliberative setting. This idea is a foundational aspect of participatory democratic processes. As Young puts it, "the normative legitimacy of a democratic decision depends on the degree to which those affected by it have been included in the decision-making process and have had the opportunity to influence the outcomes" (Young 2000, 5-6). Yet, as feminist theorists have successfully argued, the process of including people, and the circumstances that enable them to engage in deliberative debate, are not easily achieved.

People may be excluded from a given process, but they still may be included, perhaps *de facto*, in the eventual distribution of benefits (and costs). Conversely, participants may be included in the process of decision making, but not as recipients of any material benefits. Inclusion in this sense is broadly political, social, and economic,

with possibly crucial ramifications for affected parties. Forms of inclusion and exclusion can also be considered in at least two other ways. 'External exclusion' refers to those forms "that keep some individuals or groups out of the fora of debate or processes of decision-making, or which allow some individuals or groups dominative control over what happens in them" (Young 2000, 52). Ways to remedy external exclusion involve providing for multiply deliberative sites, equal access, and increased opportunities for an interested public (Gunderson 2000, 247-257). This area of concern is highly compatible with the natural resource literature described above. Conversely, less noticeable forms of 'internal exclusion' may arise "even when individuals and groups are *nominally* included" (Young 2000, 53; emphasis added). Such situations occur when opportunities for discussion are limited to certain key spokespersons and specific kinds of arguments. This may result from cultural factors (i.e. language difficulties or protocol may prevent certain individuals from speaking out; likewise, western scientific arguments may exclude other forms of knowledge), procedural impediments (such as when allotted time for discussion and debate is limited), or strategic motives (inadequate communication and information sharing may be used to group advantage). As a partial remedy to these challenging, internalized forms of exclusion, Young argues for a radical expansion of allowable modes of communication; that is, beyond rational / logical forms of public argument and debate to dynamic, cross-cultural forms of greeting, rhetoric, and narrative. She describes how such practices may "make possible understanding across structural and cultural difference, and motivate acceptance and action" (Young 2000, 57).

The categories of internal and external exclusion can be evaluated either by the natural resource planning, management, or monitoring process, or by the eventual decisions that are made. It may be useful to consider various types of outcomes (expected, obtained, socio-economic, environmental, etc.) from the conjoint perspectives of external and internal exclusion. However, if time or resources are limited, the forms of representation and inclusion may be examined through a limited number of variables once the deliberative process is complete.

Interpersonal and institutional trust

Much like inclusion, trust plays a central role in both natural resource and deliberative democratic perspectives on public participation. As discussed above, it is not so much the presence or absence of certain concepts (such as inclusion or trust) but more a matter of how they are conceptualized and characterized, and how they are normatively positioned within a larger conceptual frame.

In the natural resource literature, trust is often focused on forms of interpersonal relationships, or trust in face-to-face relationships and individual associations. Some of the early review articles in the natural resource literature identify a clear relationship between trust and successful participatory processes, and this trust factor is repeatedly articulated at the interpersonal level. Several authors reach similar conclusions about the important role of relationship building in participatory processes (Wondolleck and Yaffee 1994; Moore 1994). More recent articles also find relationship building between managers and citizens, and among citizens themselves, to be an important process-oriented measure of successful public participation (Lachapelle et al. 2003; McCool and Guthrie 2001; Shindler and Neburka 1997). The relationship between procedural justice and trust is also closely linked to the notion of fairness, which contributes to the trust people place in authorities and the decisions they make (Smith and McDonough 2001). The role of trust in this literature also focuses attention on the individual and the quality of interpersonal relationships. In most instances, these findings are grounded by the everyday realities of public participation procedures. "I trust you. Therefore, I am willing to work with you, to understand your perspective, and to live with the decisions that are jointly derived." Clearly, trust is an important element of any social relationship, and a key component of contemporary democracies. The public trusts "expert" knowledge on many complex issues, mainly because they lack sufficient time or interest to explore and understand these issues for themselves. If we can't be experts on more than a few areas, if any at all, then we must rely upon scientific, technical, and political experts to act on our behalf in responsible ways, and to manage the complexities of our modern societies.

There is a dark side, however, to the trust we impart to these experts. According to Freudenburg, "the very division of labor that permits many of the achievements of advanced industrial societies may also have the potential to become one of the most

serious sources of risk and vulnerability" (1993, 914). This vulnerability can be expressed in technical terms, whereby more complex and tightly coupled technologies such as nuclear power stations, integrated food production systems, or forest ecosystems are prone to periodic failure by design. In certain instances, institutions act inappropriately (or fail to act) within policy or technical realms, thereby exposing the public to unintended consequences. Besides these concerns over technical competence, scholars may also criticize elite-based leadership models and point to the inability of a few decision makers to reflect a broader range of public values. With increasing levels of cultural pluralism come greater demands on our leadership to be more inclusive and to encourage a greater diversity of public values (Williams 1998; Young 2000). So at the core of modern society lies a dynamic tension between two factors; on one hand, our dependence on expertise and the vulnerabilities generated by increasing knowledge requirements, and conversely, a values gap between expert decision makers and the general public.

Within this dynamic tension we observe the complementary relationship between trust and deliberation. In a world of limited resources (i.e., time, money, knowledge), the public is faced with choices about where to invest their political resources. In certain situations, levels of trust between institutions and individuals may be high. This may have one of two effects; citizens may be encouraged to participate because they feel they can make a valuable contribution, or citizens may choose to defer the opportunity to participate, leaving those decisions to a group of trusted experts or other trusted representatives. In the latter instance, for example, we may consider such issues as water treatment to be fairly straightforward, with a limited but likely adequate number of technical solutions at our disposal. Therefore, extensive public deliberation may not be very beneficial or appropriate in this context. On the other hand, where solutions are less well defined and where distrust exists between individuals and institutions, the choices associated with situating political resources become more obvious. If we don't trust the experts, then we want to be involved, to scrutinize, to debate, to influence the final outcome. In essence, variance in trust provides direction for individual to invest their time and energy. This functional relationship between democracy and trust might be thought of as "distinct but complementary ways of making collective decisions and

organizing collective actions. When one trusts, one forgoes the opportunity to influence decision making, on the assumption that there are shared or convergent interests between truster and trustee" (Warren 1999, 4).

If we can conclude from the natural resource literature that trusting relationships constitute a foundational quality of successful public participation, how do we reconcile the functional relationship between trust and democracy to which Warren refers? If deliberative processes are marked by a high level of trust, is it logical to conclude that citizens will continue to invest their political resources in those trusting relationships? Or are they just as likely to shift those resources into other areas of public life where distrust and uncertainty are more acute? In other words, does it make sense that interpersonal trust serves to further the democratic process? Perhaps not. Here, then, we can begin to observe the important distinction between interpersonal trust and institutional trust that deliberative democrats have attempted to articulate.

Again, it is useful to draw the source of this argument about institutional trust from historical and conceptions descriptions of the public sphere. In his early conceptions of the public sphere, Habermas argues that, "citizens behave as a public body when they confer in an unrestricted fashion – that is, with the guarantee of freedom of assembly and association and the freedom to express and publish their opinions – about matters of general interest" (1964, 136). This argument for procedural norms associated with public deliberation is carried through in contemporary discussions regarding trust and democracy. Offe (1999), for instance, suggests that the kinds of problems facing contemporary society are unavoidably institutional. In other words, deliberative processes require 'rules of the game' whereby all individuals, regardless of the quality of personal relationships, can trust the process to be fair, accessible and safe. Individuals who may wish to participate in public policy issues, who make a conscious choice to invest their political resources in a particular issue of concern (perhaps because they distrust the current actors in various ways), are more likely to enter such deliberative spaces if certain guarantees are in place; namely, ones that assure their safety, allow their voice to be heard, and provide hope to influence outcomes. Trust, from this perspective, ceases to be interpersonal, and takes on an institutional flavor. Actors may not trust each other, but they do (or maybe hope to) trust the procedures for engagement. So from a deliberative

democratic perspective, trust and public participation are intrinsically linked. But the deliberative democrat tends to emphasize the importance of institutional trust rather than interpersonal trust.

Moreover, some theorists are beginning to contemplate a functional role for distrust. "Distrust is essential not only to democratic progress but also, we might think, to the healthy suspicion of power upon which the vitality of democracy depends" (Warren 1999, 310). Other theorists are proposing a notion of 'critical trust.' Under certain conditions, citizens may be willing to participate in a deliberative process because those involved may have a history of reliability and are thought to deal in good faith, while at the same time they may be skeptical and question the utility of certain procedures and the accuracy of received information (Poortinga and Pidgeon 2003).

For some natural resource managers, where distrust feeds fear and misunderstanding, the idea that distrust is functional to the democratic process may appear, if not antithetical to their own experience, at least somewhat counterproductive. Many public practitioners work hard to create spaces where distrusting relationships are transformed in ways where individuals can listen to each other and, if not agree, at least acknowledge and understand alternative points of view. In terms of shared understanding and mutual learning, deliberative democrats are certainly seeking many of the same ends by thinking about institutional designs for public deliberation. However, deliberative democrats do caution against the tendency for practitioners to seek trust in ways that may depoliticize the deliberative process. If we trust those with knowledge and authority, then we become less scrutinizing, less critical, less aware of abuse and exploitation, and perhaps less democratic.

Conclusion

This article introduces a deliberative democratic perspective to public participation in natural resource management. In most cases, we have only exposed some major threads in a richly textured and highly contrasting body of literature. However, for authors in the natural resource and the deliberative democratic literature, issues of decision making, inclusion, and trust loom large in theory and practice. Inasmuch as these are shared issues, we also observe some strong points of departure between these two literatures. A

deliberative turn in natural resource management would place more emphasis on the quality of debate, rather than the quality of decisions. A deliberative turn would focus on forms of internal exclusion, rather than focusing primarily on forms of external exclusion. A deliberative turn would focus on institutional levels of trust, rather than interpersonal levels of trust. All of these distinctions hold implications for prescriptive policy frameworks on public participation as well as normative criteria associated with evaluation research.

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